IN THE UTTERMOST EAST

C. H. HAWES

IN THE UTTERMOST EAST

AN OROCHON WOMAN. [*Frontispiece.*

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BEING

AN ACCOUNT OF INVESTIGATIONS AMONG THE NATIVES AND RUSSIAN CONVICTS OF THE ISLAND OF SAKHALIN, WITH NOTES OF TRAVEL IN KOREA, SIBERIA, AND MANCHURIA

BY

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To

THE GREAT AND ALL POWERFUL

PAL NI VOOKH AND TOL NI VOOKH

THIS TRIBUTE

PREFACE

MANY books on Siberia have appeared during the last two decades, most of which fall into one of two categories; the earlier, into what we may label "exile literature," and the later, "Siberian railway sketches."

The present work belongs in part to both of these classes, but deals chiefly with a portion of Siberia far beyond the terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway—the little-known island of Sakhalin. Such a *terra incognita* has Sakhalin been in the history of exploration, that until the year 1849 it was believed to be a peninsula even by the Russians; and six years later, in 1855, an English naval commander was outwitted owing to the prevailing ignorance of its insularity.*

It is therefore not surprising that, even as late as this twentieth century, I should have been the first English traveller to explore the northern interior. The sources of our knowledge of Sakhalin, even in Russian, are few, and in English, if little has been heard of the convicts there, nothing has been written about the Gilyak and Orochon natives. With the expansion of the penal settlements, and the future, though not impending, development of the resources of the island, must follow the decay of the

* See *post*, p. 100.

native in the presence of the white man. Already the former is modifying or abandoning his religious rites and ceremonies. It therefore behoved me to place these on record before they became lost to the investigator or buried in tradition.

If in the course of the narrative faunal and floral species have been noted, this is only what every traveller owes to the scientist and the ever-increasing body of students. At the same time no one regrets more than I do, that I was so inadequately equipped for my task among almost unknown peoples and amid strange physical conditions.

Of the faulty state of the penal administration, and the unfortunate condition of the "exile-settlers" described in these pages, it is devoutly to be hoped that in any future investigations no trace may be found. At the same time a word of warning is due, lest the reader should found a generalization for Siberia upon this particular settlement. Sakhalin is the colony to which all Russia's worst criminals are despatched, and the very name of the island is banned in St. Petersburg. Moreover, it is a far cry to the capital —the sign-post in front of the post-office at Alexandrovsk says 10,172 versts (6752 miles)—and the threads of control cannot be pulled tight. Since the publication of Mr. George Kennan's two volumes,* great improvements have been made in the conditions of prisoners, throughout Siberia, not excepting Sakhalin; but that island still lags, as ever, many years behind the average penal settlement on the mainland.

In Chapter VI. will be found a brief *résumé* of the

* "Siberia and the Exile System."

history and general features of Sakhalin. The rest of the book, including the notes on Korea and Manchuria, consists mainly of a personal narrative. It makes no claim to an exhaustive account of Sakhalin or the neighbouring regions, for the author's object has been to place before the reader pictures. Incidents, trivial in themselves, illustrate and bring home to the mind the everyday life of native and white man in this far eastern world, more effectively than any detailed statement of habits and customs.

The *incognito* of five or six persons who figure in the narrative has been preserved. Courtesy, if not fairness, to certain exiles and officials demanded this; and not to have done so could have served no good purpose, and perhaps embarrassed or injured them. Should this book find its way to Sakhalin or Eastern Siberia, these persons will be recognized, and, indeed, two or three of them are well-known in European Russia.

My thanks are due first of all to Mr. X., my interpreter on the island of Sakhalin, a man of rank and education and a convict, without whom these investigations could never have been made. A few days before these words were penned, I received a letter telling of his escape to Japan—after many exciting experiences—"packed up in a cupboard."

To Mr. Ellinsky, I am also deeply indebted, not only for the meteorological records of Alexandrovsk, but for many notes, which he had made on the subject of the natives.

In confirming my own observations of the fauna and flora of the island, I have derived assistance from the

work of two St. Petersburg professors, A. M. Nikolsky and Fr. Schmidt.

In the matter of illustrations, I have a like pleasant duty to fulfil. Those appearing in the text have been sketched from articles in my possession, but the plates are in all cases from photographs. For those not taken by myself I am indebted to Mr. A. von Friken, Inspector of Agriculture on the island of Sakhalin, to Mr. Kuznetsov and to Mr. Ellinsky. For seven out of the eight (the first was by the author) forming the remarkable and unique series of the bear fête, I can only here record my thanks to one whom I met on the island, but who wishes to remain anonymous.

CAMBRIDGE,
October, 1903.

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GLOSSARY

An adequate transliteration of Russian words, giving their exact phonetic equivalents in English seems to me impossible, and the following is an admittedly faulty attempt; yet, such as it is, its value will be increased to the reader by a few words on the pronunciation of the transliterations. The following remarks may be taken to apply not only to the Russian but also to the Gilyak and Ainu words.

The vowel sounds have the value of the Italian

a	is pronounced	as		in	f*a*ther.
è	„	„		„	th*e*re.
i	„	„	*ee*	„	f*ee*d.
o	„	„		„	c*o*d.
u	„	„	*oo*	„	f*oo*d.

The letter *i* in the following transliterations, B*i*t, Gotov*i*, Isp*i*tuem*i*kh, Isp*i*tovat, Kab*i*la, R*i*ba and V*i*, has the sound of a shortened *ui*.

Double vowels are not diphthongs, but are pronounced separately, *e.g.* Due and Manue (names of Sakhalin villages) are respectively Doo-e (like the French town Douai) and Ma-noo-e.

Of the consonants *g* is always hard, and *s* as in a*ss*e*ss*, but never like *z*; *ch* is pronounced as in *ch*ur*ch*, and never as in German; *shtch* as *shed ch* in fami*shed ch*ild; and finally *zh* as *z* in a*z*ure.

RUSSIAN WORDS.

Alén, plural *aléni* .	Deer, used in Sakhalin to denote reindeer.
Arestánt, plural *i* .	Prisoner.
Artél	A guild or workmen's association.
Balshóy . . .	Great.

Bárin	Gentleman.
Blin, í	Pancake.
Bog	God. Dat. case, *Bógu*.
Bóyka	"Pidgin" Russian (in the East) for "boy," *i.e.* waiter, etc.
Brátsky . . .	Fraternal. See p. 455, *n.*
Brodyága, i . .	Vagabond, a passportless vagrant; generally in Eastern Siberia an escaped convict.
Búdet	Will be; 3rd pers. sing. future of *bit*, to be.
Burán	Snowstorm.
Chai	Tea.
Chas	Hour; *sey chas*, lit. this hour, immediately.
Chto	What?
Dekábr . . .	December.
Desyatína, i . .	Square measure = 2·7 acres (nearly).
Do	Till, to. *Do* or *da svidániya*. See *svidánie*.
Dókha	A term current in Eastern Siberia for a long and ample coat lined inside and outside with fur.
Dugá	An arc, hence the bow-shaped yoke spanning the shafts.
Étape	Prisoners' resting-place *en route*, where they sleep two consecutive nights. A *pólu étape* accommodates them for one night only.
Éto	This, that.
Famíliya . . .	Family, surname.
Gilyákskiy . . .	Adj., of or belonging to the Gilyaks.
Gorbúsha . . .	A term current in Eastern Siberia, Kamchatka, and North America, for *Salmo proteus*.
Górod	Town, city.
Gotóvi	Ready.
Grécha	Buckwheat, generally cooked or steamed like boiled rice.
Gubérnski . . .	Local (gaol).
Gusínoy . . .	An adj. formed from *Gus*, a goose. *Gusínoy ózero*, Goose Lake.
I	And.
Ikóna, i . . .	Image, sacred picture.
Ikrá	Caviare, roe of sturgeon.
Intelligénti . . .	The educated classes.

Ispitúemikh . . . *Razryád ispitúemikh*, the division or category of those being tested; "testing" prison. Gen. plural of the pres. part. pass. of *ispitovat*, to test.

Ispravlyáyushtchikhsya Gen. plural of pres. part. of the reflective verb *ispravlyatsya*; *razryád ispravlyáyushtchikhsya*, the division or category of those (prisoners) being reformed. "Reformatory" prison.

Isprávnik . . Chief of the police in a district.

Izvóstchik, i . . Cabman, or driver of hired vehicle.

Kabargá . . . Musk-deer.

Kabíla . . . . Lit. mare, hence a bench to which the prisoner about to be flogged is strapped.

Kak . . . . How, in what manner.

Kámera, i . . . A room, a prison-ward.

Kandálnaya . . Fem. of adj. *kandálnoy*, chained. *Kandálnaya yurmá*, lit. chained prison, the prison of the chained.

Kantselyáriya . . Chancellerie.

Kavkáz . . . The Caucasus.

Káya . . . . An Eastern Siberian term for the driver of a *nárta*.

Khalát, i . . . Lit. a morning gown, but used for the long overcoat worn by the prisoners in summer.

Khlyeb . . . Bread, a loaf.

Kibítka . . . A rude little four-wheeled vehicle with a seat for two behind the driver.

Kíta . . . . A term current in Eastern Siberia, Kamchatka, and North America, for *Salmo lagocephalus*.

Kitáesky . . . Chinese, from *Kitái*, China.

Knut . . . . Whip. See p. 340.

Kopyéyka . . . A kopyek; one-hundredth part of a ruble, or one farthing in value.

Kto . . . . Who?

Limán . . . . Estuary.

Lyodokól . . . Ice-breaker.

Lóshad, i . . . Horse.

Luná . . . . The moon.

Málenkiy . . . Little, small.

Mátushka . . . Dim. of *mat*, mother, mother dear!

Mayá	Adj. fem. of *moy*, my.
Medvyét . . .	Lit. honey eater, bear.
Míshka . . .	Colloquial for bear.
Muzhík, i . . .	Peasant.
Nachálnik . . .	Superintendent or chief, whether of an officer or men.
Nárta	An Eastern Siberian term for a dog-sledge.
Ne	Not.
Nichevó . . .	Nothing, it matters not.
Nyet	No.
Óblast	Province or "territory."
Ókrug, i . . .	District.
Okrúzhni . . .	Adj. from *ókrug*, of a district.
Óstrov	Island.
Ózero	Lake.
Palách . . .	Executioner, flogger.
Parásha . . .	Excrement bucket.
Pazhál'sta, pazháluista,	Please, if you please.
Peresílní . . .	A forwarding prison. See p. 66.
Pirashók, pl. *pirashkí* .	Pasty, dough-nut with minced meat inside.
Plet	Whip. See p. 340.
Pólu-	Half.
Pos(s)elénets . .	"Exile-settler."
Poselénie . . .	Exile-settlement.
Prázdnik . . .	Holiday, feast-day.
Prístan . . .	Wharf, jetty.
Prolyótka . . .	Small Victoria (carriage).
Pud	40 lbs. Russian, or 36·11 lbs. English.
Razryád . . .	Section, category.
Razyézd . . .	Lit. passing place. *Kitáesky razyézd*, Chinese junction.
Ríba	Fish.
Rózga, i . . .	Rod, birch rods.
Rubáshka . . .	Shirt.
Rubl	A ruble. The exchange value fluctuates about 2*s.* 1*d.*
Sabáka . . .	Dog.
Samovár . . .	Kettle in the form of a tea urn.
Sázhen, i . . .	Lineal measurement = 7 ft.
Serdítiy . . .	Angry.
Séy	This.
Shtchi	Cabbage soup.

Shúba, i . . . Fur coat, generally applied to the peasants' sheepskin coats.

Skólko . . . . How much ?

Skóro . . . . Quickly.

Sláva . . . . Glory. *Sláva Bógu*, thank God.

Smotrítel . . . Superintendent.

Sólntse. . . . Sun.

Stakán . . . Glass, tumbler.

Stántsiya, sii . . Station, post-station

Stárosta . . . Bailiff, headman of a village.

Stóit . . . Costs, or is worth.

Stryelyáy . . . Shoot ! Imperat. 2nd pers. sing. of *stryelyát*, to shoot.

Stupáy. . . . Go away ! Imperat. 2nd pers. sing of *stupát*, to go.

Svidánie . . . Meeting, *da svidániya*, till we meet again.

Taigá . . . . The Siberian forest or jungle.

Takóy . . . . Such, *chto eto takóy*, what is it ?

Tam . . . . There.

Telyéga, i . . . Cart. See p. 308.

Téterev . . . Capercailzie.

Tíshe . . . . Gently !

Tróika, i . . . Team of three horses abreast.

Túndra . . . The northern belt of Siberia, a treeless waste of swamps. See p. 224.

Tyurmá . . . Prison.

Tyótushka . . . Auntie, dim. of *tyótka*, aunt.

Tyuléniy . . . Adj. from *tyulén*, a seal, *Ostrov tyuléniy*, Seal Island.

Ukáz . . . . Edict, Imperial proclamation.

Versta . . . . A verst = 3500 feet, or ·663 mile nearly.

Vi . . . . You.

Yamshtchík . . . Post-boy, but here driver of a *telyéga*.

Yúkola . . . A Kamchatkan term for dried or cured fish, used generally throughout Siberia.

Yúrta, i . . . Nomad's tent.

Zakúska . . . Snack, hors-d'œuvre.

Zaryá . . . . Dawn.

Zdrávstvuete . . Good morning ! 2nd pers. plural imperat. of *Zdrávstvovat*, to be in good health.

Znáyu . . . . I know.

Zolotník, i . . . A weight, one-ninety-sixth of a Russian lb., or ·15 oz. avoirdupois.

GILYAK WORDS

(Mainly forms of the Tim and Tro Gilyaks, but including some in use by the West Coast tribe).

Caur (*kaur*) . . Iron-tipped sticks for guiding and arresting the dog-sledges.

Cha or *chai* . . . A bay.

Chak vi hünch . . See *Tol vi hünch*.

Cham . . . . Medicine-man of the Gilyaks. See pp. 234–5.

Cham-gash . . . Seal-harpoon of great length.

Cham-long (*Kham-long*) Eagle month. On Sakhalin February.

Ch'khnai . . . Wooden images used by the *cham* in exorcising. See p. 237.

Chookh . . . Thou, God!

Ch'uff . . . . Bear.

Dzhakho . . . Knife; used as the men's hunting and general purposes knife.

Gazhu . . . . A remedy. A piece of a wasp's nest.

Genich . . . . To buy. *Umgu genich*, to buy (*i.e.* to marry) a wife.

Hakh pisakh . . Woman's wadded hat with lappets, from Manchuria.

I . . . . . River.

Jigind . . . . To quit a hut. See p. 191.

Kakh . . . . Bear-spear.

Kan-hi . . . Haddock (*Gadus æglefinus* or *Vachnya*).

Karr long . . . Crow month. On Sakhalin March.

Kashk . . . . Lily (*Fritillaria Kamchatkensis*).

Kau . . . . To the right (hand).

Kaukray . . . No, nothing.

Khal, pl. *a* . . . Clan.

Kh'm . . . . Quiver.

Kikkik . . . . Hooper swan (*Cygnus musicus*).

Kiskh . . . . God, the creator or judge of good and evil, but used also in a vague and general way for all gods.

Kiskh ni much . . God give.

Klenu . . . . The council of village elders.

Koiba . . . . Rings (finger).

Koscha . . . A tambourine covered with fish-skins.
Ku . . . . Arrows.
Kuni . . . . "Many Fish and Bears River," a tributary of the *Tim*.
Kusind . . . To enter a hut. See p. 191.
Kuvi . . . . "Many Sables River," a tributary of the *Tim*.
Langerr . . . Hair seal (*Phoca vitulina*).
Locha . . . . Russians.
Marikh . . . Fish-spear.
Meskh . . . . Earrings
Mligh-vo . . . The "other world" village whither the spirits of those who died a natural death journey.
Moshun-tomash . . Field camomile.
Nakh . . . . The bench that surrounds three sides of the Gilyak hut.
Ni vookh . . . A god or lord. See *Pal ni vookh*, etc.
Nookh-tses . . . Carved bone needle-cases.
Olf-rega . . . A remedy. Squirrel's tail.
Or'nish . . . The name by which the Orochons are known to the Gilyaks.
Paff . . . . Box in which the ashes of deceased are placed.
Pal . . . . Mountain, forest.
Pal ni vookh . . Lord or god of the (mountain or) forest.
Pal ni vookh chi-sonch The prayer to the lord of the forest (Sable holiday).
Pal rush . . . Forest *daimones*.
Pilencho . . . Halibut (*Pleuronectes hippoglossus*).
Pis . . . . *Heracleum barbatum*.
Pore! . . . . Stop!
Puchi . . . . Tangle seaweed (*Laminaria esculenta*).
Punch . . . . Bow.
Raff . . . . The tiny hut for the temporary sojourn of the soul of the deceased.
Rik . . . . Cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*).
Ru-er . . . . Cousins.
Takh! . . . . On!
Ti! . . . . Forward!
Tim . . . . Cranberry. The name given to one of the two great rivers of Sakhalin.
Tin kirn . . . A rude fiddle of one string.

Tlo . . . . Heaven, whither the spirits of the murdered and suicides fly direct.

Tol . . . . Water.

Tolf an . . . Summer year, which includes spring and summer, and is inaugurated by the seal hunt and *Tol vi hünch.*

Tolf tuf . . . Gilyak summer hut.

Tol ni vookh . . Lord or god of water (sea and rivers).

Tol vi hünch . . "Water or sea holiday."

Torif . . . . Gilyak winter hut.

Tulf an . . . Winter year, which includes autumn and winter, and is inaugurated by the sable holiday, *Pal ni vookh chi-sonch.*

Tul-noss . . . A remedy. A piece of a squirrel's ear.

Tur . . . . Fire.

Tur ni vookh . . Lord or god of fire.

Tu-tut . . . . Eastern turtle-dove (*Turtur orientalis*).

Tzakh . . . . A twig with whittled shavings at the top.

Uich . . . . Unlucky, ill-omened.

Uichka rush . . Water *daimones.*

Umgu, or *ungu dzhakho* Woman's (fish and domestic) knife.

Vibuis . . . . Belt with gunpowder, skin flask, shot horn, flint and tinder pouch, etc.

Vo . . . . A village.

Yu-ru . . . . Automatic bow-and-arrow snare.

AINU WORDS

Chi . . . . Baked or dried.

Inao . . . . A twig with whittled shavings depending from the top.

Kotan . . . . A village.

Nai . . . . River.

Poro . . . . Great. *Poronai*, great river.

Toi . . . . Clay. *Toichi*, makers of baked clay. See pp. 114–5.

CORRIGENDA

Page 4, line 34, *for* "paintings" *read* "painting."
,, 7, ,, 10, *for* "haus-frau" *read* "hausfrau."
,, 19, ,, 2, *for* "*tchai*" *read* "*chai.*"
,, 36, ,, 9 and 14, *for* "Orotchons" *read* "Orochons."
,, 44, ,, 2 and 7, *for* "droshkies and droshky" *read* "drozhkies and drozhky."
,, 44, ,, 31, *for* "Kamtchatka" *read* "Kamchatka."
,, 53, ,, 24, *for* "Niüchen" *read* "Nü-chen."
,, 57, ,, 5, *for* "*stantsiyas*" *read* "*stantsii.*"
,, 66, ,, 18 and 21, *for* "*perisilni*" *read* "*peresilni.*"
,, 81, ,, 35, *for* "*proletka*" *read* "*prolyotka.*"
,, 82, ,, 27, *for* "*nachnalnik*" *read* "*nachalnik.*"
,, 95, omit first note at foot of page.
,, 99, ,, 22, *for* "Gevrilov" *read* "Gavrilov."
,, 99, ,, 25, *for* "Nevelsky" *read* "Nevelskoy."
,, 103, ,, 3, *for* "*amureuse*" *read* "*amurense.*"
,, 109, ,, 11, *for* "*caur*" *read* "*kaur.*"
,, 110, ,, 2, *for* "*Tach! tach!*" *read* "*Takh! takh!*"
,, 115, ,, 9, *for* "Behring" *read* "Bering."
,, 116, ,, 16, *for* "Orotchons" *read* "Orochons."
,, 119, ,, 35, *for* "*turmi*" *read* "*tyurmi.*"
,, 123, note at foot, *for* peasant *read* "peasant."
,, 150, line 12, *for* "Muraviev" *read* "Lazarev."
,, 150, ,, 21, *for* "*turma*" *read* "*tyurma.*"
,, 152, ,, 9, *omit* "*imya.*"
,, 176, ,, 4, *for* "*Ostrova*" *read* "*Ostrov.*"
,, 176, ,, 5, *for* "latter" *read* "hair seal."
,, 181, ,, 5, *for* "reach" *read* "beach."
,, 196, ,, 23, *for* "(species of wild rhubarb, I believe)" *read* "(*Heracleum barbatum* and *Laminaria esculenta*)."
,, 207, ,, 29, *omit* "as in the picture."
,, 210, ,, 15, *for* "dumbfounded" *read* "dumfounded.
,, 221, ,, 20, *for* "Orotchon" *read* "Orochon."
, 226, ,, 6, *for* "*Cham-long*" *read* "*Kham-long.*"
,, 229, ,, 13, *for* "is" *read* "are."
,, 246, ,, 1, *for* "*mestch*" *read* "*meskh.*"
,, 263, ,, 18, *for* "*Pilsudsky*" *read* "*Pilsudski.*"
,, 272, ,, 35, *for* "*kos-cha*" *read* "*kanga.*

Page 297, line 33, *for* "*kabaga*" *read* "*kabarga.*"
,, 302, ,, 19, *for* "*medviet*" *read* "*medvyet.*"
,, 331, ,, 25, *for* "Muraviev" *read* "Lazarev."
,, 338, ,, 15, *for* "*turma*" *read* "*tyurma.*"
,, 354, ,, 25, *for* "*turma*" *read* "*tyurma.*"
,, 358, ,, 13, *for* "*proletka*" *read* "*prolyotka.*"
,, 364, last line, *for* "pounced upon, arrested him" *read* "pounced upon and arrested him."
,, 393, line 20, *for* "*turma*" *read* "*tyurma.*"
,, 398, ,, 34, *for* "bunks" *read* "bunkers."
,, 415, ,, 34, *for* "has" *read* "had."
,, 420, ,, 18, *for* "*proletka*" *read* "*prolyotka.*"
,, 423, ,, 2 of note, *for* "Hey-lung-kiang" *read* "Heh-lung-kiang."
,, 442, ,, 18 and 30, *for* "*pirishki*" *read* "*pirashki.*"
,, 449, ,, 16, *for* "Verkne" *read* "Verkhne."
,, 457, ,, 33, *for* "*lodokol*" *read* "*lyodokol.*"

IN THE UTTERMOST EAST

CHAPTER I

FROM NAGASAKI TO GENSAN

Bound for the Russian Empire—A dangerous coast—Korea a land of mystery—Where are the 11,000,000?—Fusan—City gentlemen from mud-huts—The site of a great invasion—Gensan—A difficult arithmetical problem—800 mung for a pair of hinges.

AFTER many wanderings in the Orient, I found myself at length on board a Japanese steamer at Nagasaki, bound for Vladivostok.

There was some stir in the harbour as a Russian vessel, filled with homeward-bound troops from Port Arthur, steamed slowly in and let go her anchor. Rumour had it that this was the *Yaroslav*, of the Russian "Volunteer Fleet," bound for the island of Sakhalin with its sad freight of convicts, but it was not so, for she had not left Odessa then, and more than two months were to elapse before I was to see her and her cargo. All doubt was set at rest when the Russian Tommy was seen in his great jack-boots wandering through the narrow streets of the Japanese town, lost in amazement at the dapper little light-hearted people, and their numberless shops gay with a thousand and one strange novelties.

The last sampan had left our side, steam was up, and our bow turned to the west ere the setting sun warned us

to be alert. Even as we got under weigh a charming sight met our gaze. Far off, silhouetted against the sky, picturesque junks with spreading sail were returning through the golden gateway of the harbour.

One by one great ironclads were passed, for the Powers were but slowly evacuating Peking, and here, as off Taku and in the Yang-tse-Kiang, the great battleships of Europe flew their different flags. The verdant and richly wooded slopes of Nagasaki harbour left behind, a respectable berth was given to the isle of Pappenberg (Japanese, Takoboko), which a mistaken tradition has assigned as the scene of the martyrdom of native Christians in the seventeenth century.

Our course lay north-north-west, and as darkness set in, a pleasant surprise awaited those who, familiar with the coasts of China, Korea, and the Orient generally, gazed for the first time upon the coast-line of Japan by night. Hundreds, nay, thousands of twinkling lights like myriad glow-worms decked the shores, telling of busy villages and hinting at the populousness of Japan. The traveller recently arrived from the Philippines, Australia or Korea, and steaming by night through the Inland Sea, with its gaily lit shores, is as much taken aback as was the Suffolk farmer who, driving up to London, and struck by the sight of so many people as he reached Shoreditch, asked, "Be there a fair here to-day?"

The general reader, who thinks of New Zealand as separated from Australia by merely a channel instead of a 1200 knots' steam, probably makes the opposite mistake in the relative positions of Korea and Japan. Though by no means the nearest points, Nagasaki, from which I had started, and Fusan, for which I was bound, are only 100 knots apart, and even this distance is halved by the intermediate islands of Tsushima. "The Twins," as they are also called, have this peculiarity—that at low tide they form one island. Tsushima is beautifully

wooded and mountainous, possesses a magnificent natural harbour and promises to become a great health resort.

Early on the following morning, the mountainous east coast of Korea, with its striking contrast to the low sand-flats of the western shores, broke upon our view; but as I approached this, the south-eastern corner of the peninsula, I missed the charming picture of a sea dotted with green islets, which one enjoys off the south-western coast.

Several weeks earlier, in travelling from Chifu to Nagasaki, our vessel had threaded its way for some hours through a maze of islands gay with patches of green barley and paddy fields, and the hill slopes dotted with tiny clusters of thatched huts. Suddenly a fog drove down upon us, darkness descended, and we were compelled to heave to. The next morning we awoke to find ourselves still in the net-work of verdant islands and barren rocks, some of which were but a stone's throw from our starboard bow. It was a difficult coast, only partially surveyed, and the scene of many a wreck—a coast rendered more dangerous by an entire absence of light-houses, a feature of modern civilization of which Korea is devoid.

It was with keen expectation I looked forward to really setting foot in Korea, that land of mystery which lured the wanderer with its promises of secret surprises, and drew him with all the glamour of an unknown country. With such a feeling did I gaze upon the scene before me as we entered the port of Pusan, or rather Fusan, the Japanese name by which it is more generally known.

The harbour, backed by great bluff hills, offers a sheltered anchorage. The least depth of the entrance at low-water springs is twenty-eight feet. There is a noticeable absence of trees, a barrenness accentuated by a clump or two of cryptomerias (Japanese cedars) brought over by the Japanese settlers voluntarily exiled from the land of their birth; but this dearth of foliage was by no means displeasing to the visitor from

Japan, for the breezy hills with their short grass, inviting to a run and a climb, were a pleasant contrast to the dampness and smell of the paddy fields and the suffocating closeness of the thickets one had left behind.

But my surprise was great when I saw such an insignificant settlement. On maps and in statistics of Korea, the ports Fusan, Gensan, and Chemulpho loom large and important, and what now lay before us in the bay was a mere collection of thatched mud-huts. Such was the Korean "town" of Fusan! In front of us was a busier settlement of several hundred Japanese homes, the Japanese Fusan or Sorio; but if this was one of the first ports of Korea, where were the 11,000,000 of population, and what did they do for a living? It is true one heard much about the exports of rice, for Japan and Korea were almost on the eve of a quarrel, a bad harvest having determined the latter to consider the question of prohibiting the export of rice, a proceeding which threatened to spell famine for Japan. Mention was made also of gold, beans, seaweed, and ginseng (from Chemulpho), and figures told of an increasing trade. The import of foreign cottons and kerosene had grown so rapidly that it was within human possibility that this influx might disturb the immemorial reposefulness of the Korean character. Was not an economic upheaval possible when the peasant, largely dependent on the proceeds of his hemp crop, which he sold to native weavers, and his castor-oil beans, which went to native oil-refiners, found his means of livelihood rapidly going? But where were the signs of a great trade?

Another puzzle stared one in the face. What was to be made of the anomaly that this country claimed to have given Japan her art at the end of the sixteenth century; that from that time Japanese paintings, faience,* and

* It is interesting to note that in the village of Tsuboya, in the Japanese province of Satsuma, the manufacture of the famous "Satsuma

metal-work took on a new lease of life; and yet, in a short campaign from 1592 to 1598, the latter nation so absolutely crushed the former that she presents the lamentable spectacle of to-day?

The Japanese settlement lies at the foot of abruptly sloping hills of imposing height, and bears a no distant resemblance to the site of Hobart in Tasmania, though the latter is situated at the base of a much deeper inlet. By the kindly intervention of the Japanese ex-Consul of Hankau, who was bound for his new post at Gensan, *kagos*, or palanquins, were secured for myself and a fellow-passenger, in which to make the three-mile journey along the coast to the native "city" of Fusan, which we had already espied from the ship. Our way was a pleasant marly track, with the beautiful harbour on our right, and the grand verdant hills on our left. We found the *kagos* awaiting us at the Chinese settlement of Sinsorio. They were not nearly so comfortable as those in use in South China, and resembled small meat-safes, with green gauze curtains. The passenger had to sit screwed up tailor-fashion, and the three stalwart bearers, unlike the Chinese or Japanese, insisted on a rest at about every half-mile.

The road was evidently a much-used one, for we met numbers of foot-passengers, and one notable personage on horseback. He was a sedate Korean, perched on a couple of band-boxes, on top of a diminutive pony, bespectacled—the man, not the pony—with great saucer-like horn goggles, such as one sees in old collections. But his *confrères* on foot astonished me. I felt I was but in *déshabillé* compared with these swell-dressed beaux—fine tall men, with tufty beards and bronzed countenances, clad in spotless white, and Welsh-shaped black hats perched on the top of coils of glossy hair, and tied under

faience" is still carried on by the descendants of the Korean captives brought over by Shimadzu Yoshihiro, the feudal lord of Satsuma, in 1598.

the chin, sauntering past, long pipe in hand. I remarked to my acquaintance that these must be the "ten to four frock-coated, silk-hatted city gents" of Fusan. But as we neared their homes in the native city, our wonderment increased. These were no double-fronted villas, with "tradesmen's entrance" in staring capitals on the further gate, but a collection of mud hovels, with thatched roofs. No chimney broke the outline, nor relieved the dead level of seeming ant-heaps, for the chimneys rose from the ground at the end of little tunnels, or were simply pipes emerging low down from the wall of the hut. Adjoining the one living-room was a tiny strip of a kitchen on a lower level, so that the fire might be kindled from here under the floor of the living-room, as with a Chinese bed; a very economical method of heating the room, though perhaps an Englishman, who sleeps for the first time in winter above one of these stoke-holes (*agung*), might in his dreams fancy he had left this world for another, but not better! But if we were surprised at the poverty of their homes, we were more puzzled to know how, in these low-roofed hovel-rooms of 8 × 8 × 6 feet, the white-robed gentry could be turned out so clean. The problem was partially solved for me two days later, when, wandering in the native village or town of Gensan, I observed a Korean gentleman taking a siesta, his legs in the hut, and the rest of him in the street, his coiffure and "top hat" undisturbed, as his head was resting on a wooden pillow. The husbands of the lower classes are frequently supported by their wives, which perhaps accounted for the number of loungers we met along the coast road and in the village street. Thus the poor wife does not only the cooking, sewing, washing, and multifarious home duties, but, especially in remote parts, the weeding, reaping and general field work. Needlework takes up no inconsiderable portion of her time, for her lord has all his clothes made at home, and this means a heavy tax on her, for unless he

be turned out spotless, she will be known as a slattern. The amount of work this involves in unpicking, washing, and sewing is astonishing, for all his clothes are washable ; and his garments are so voluminous that one writer, who has lived in Korea for years, has said that his "pantaloons would provide a loose under-garment for the statue of Liberty, New York harbour."

After this, it is needless to say, that the qualities sought for in a wife are not beauty or charm of manner, but those of a good "haus-frau." The goal of life of the Korean, the Korean male at least, is not to accomplish some great work, but rather to get along without working at all. This is to be a gentleman of the true aristocratic school.

Passing through the native "town" of Fusan, we came by narrow alleys to the back of it, and began to climb the great hill which sheltered it from the north wind. A clamber up the red marly slopes, covered with the greenest of grasses and dotted with tiny quartz fragments, brought us to the summit. From here on that memorable day, the 13th of the fourth month of the year 1592, what a sight must have met the eye! A vast invading army of at least 130,000, possibly double that number, had set sail from the shores of Japan, and landing here, probably on the site of the present Japanese settlement, captured the Korean town of Pusan and the neighbouring castle of Tong-nai. And though victory was coy and favoured this year the Japanese, and the next the Koreans and Chinese, that first day was most surely the beginning of the end—the down-fall of Korea. It could have been no virile state that fell from its height so suddenly, but rather like the Roman Empire, its fall had begun from within ere it was attacked from without.

From where we stood could be descried the unique and picturesque gate, erected after this memorable invasion, giving entrance to the old walled city, which is being deserted for the adjoining site to the west. Just inside were

later historical links in the shape of memorial stones, calling to mind Celtic crosses, which we were told had been erected to the memory of mandarins who had "squeezed" less than was customary from the inhabitants.

Among the mud and thatch hovels of the new "town" stood out a bungalow, the home of the Australian Presbyterian Mission, whither we had been courteously invited to a midday meal. On our way thither we passed through the main street empty of buyers and offering no tempting wares to the passer-by save some stiff hempen muslin, brass bowls and chop-sticks. I noted little save their somewhat conventional if not uncomfortable dress, that betokened an earlier civilization. The illustration shows the same street on a market or fair day, for, as in England seven centuries ago, most of the buying and selling is done at fairs. The *bazars* in the populous cities of India are busy all the week through, but in Korea, as in the Shan States, east of Burma, I found the fairs were held on every fifth day, *i.e.* at one village in the district on the first, sixth, eleventh, and so on, and at another on the second, seventh, twelfth, etc., and on other days they were practically deserted.

The next day was spent in watching the mountainous east coast of Korea, the long rugged, jagged, *dentelle* range with its deep, narrow and dark valleys. The razor-backed ridges and deeply furrowed sides of the mountains testified to the torrential nature of the streams, while their spurs, ending in abrupt cliffs, defied the attack of tide and wave. There could scarcely be a greater contrast to the low islet-studded shores of the western coast, where a tide of more than thirty feet sweeps in and out, alternately concealing and exposing great expanses of sand. Dense forests, the home of the tiger, "the old gentleman of the mountains," as the Koreans call him, clothed the steeps, and not to miss any of the wild setting of this scene, pirates had been captured here three or four weeks previously.

THE "BAZAR," FUSAN, KOREA. [*To face page* 8.

A shoal of whales was sighted, and some fine basaltic columns on our port side, and then bending our course shorewards we entered the beautiful natural harbour of Wonsan (Chinese, Yuensan), or, as it is more commonly called, Gensan (Japanese). Communications with the outer world were irregular and not too frequent, but better, except in the winter, than eight years before, when one of our passengers, a Russian naval doctor, had been wrecked here, and had to spend fifty-two days on shore before he could get away. It was afternoon as we glided slowly in, and there spread out before us was a most beautiful, sheltered bay, dotted with islets, a dreamland of fishing, yachting and bathing. An out-of-the-world spot with a pleasant climate, forests to explore, big game to hunt, a curious people to study and the most glorious effects of light on land and sea; at any rate so appears to have thought an English gentleman, whose large house stands on an island about three or four miles from the shore. Here, indeed, he could indulge his love of quiet and be quit of the demands of Society.

On the mainland, scattered in the neighbourhood, were three missionaries, the Commissioner of Customs and two other Englishmen, besides a Russian and another European.

After a short spell on *terra firma* we put out at sundown to rejoin the steamer, and a most glorious scene encircled us. Our sampan seemed to ride on a sea of molten silver, backed by great purple-black mountains, arched by a pale rose-shot sky.

The Japanese settlement at Gensan, off which vessels anchor, is a rapidly growing one. The population could not have numbered less than 2000, while it is estimated that the Koreans total some 15,000, but this latter figure includes inhabitants scattered over a considerable area.

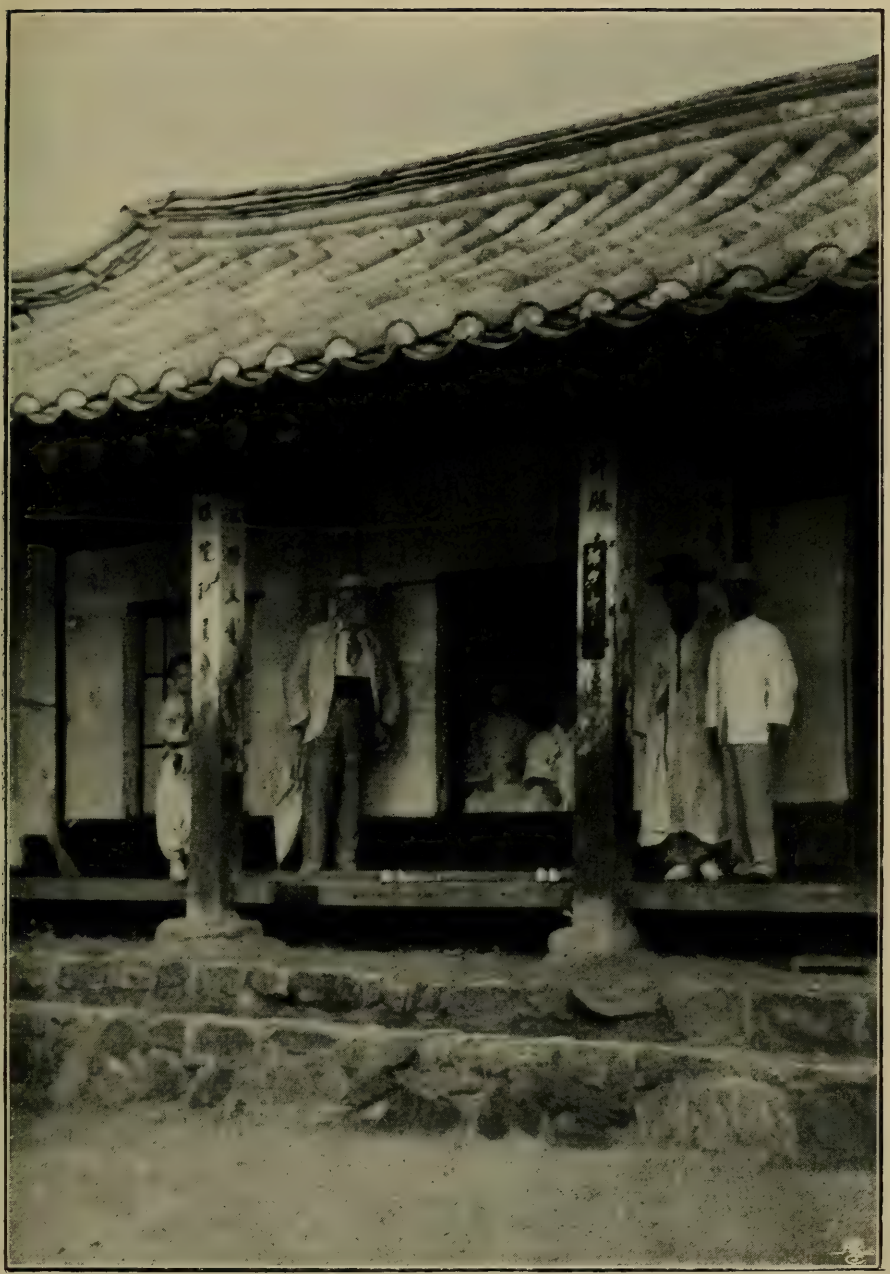
The next morning we landed on the stone jetty, where petroleum and Shanghai cotton stuffs were being unloaded, and whence beans and rice were to be shipped at the end of harvest.

As I wished to seek out any survivals of Korean art and craftsmanship, if such existed, I took with me as interpreter the secretary of the Japanese Consul, who at the same time politely told off one of the Consulate Guard to make a small collection.

Our first visit was to the Korean Post-office. We, my American companion, an acquaintance made on board, and the interpreter, passed through the "Magistrature;" a series of bow-roofed courts which to a Westerner suggested stables, and in the furthest of them were politely received by two white-robed and black-hatted officials.

Our wants were duly explained. We wished to purchase a goodly number of stamps, for there were several issues still extant, and the youthful stamp collectors at home would expect us to do our duty that day. Our whole attention was absorbed in a careful selection, and little did we reck of the difficult work of calculation to follow. The head official resorted as usual in the East to the abacus, but such an abnormal purchase presented unusual difficulty. The sum had been done in my head, and we differed. The chief essayed again, and so did his assistant, but with differing results. At last, discarding the abacus for a slate, he commenced a long addition sum, for fifteen twos (a portion of the calculation) apparently in Korea do not make thirty by multiplication, but only by addition. To our great mutual satisfaction the slate confirmed me in my solution of this tremendous problem! Our business transacted, permission was willingly given me to photograph the officials and the post-office. Two of them gravely sat down, the chief stood, and the result is seen in the accompanying view. From here by the road we proceeded in a southerly direction along the coast to the main body of the Korean village or town.

A shaky bridge, with here and there a broken plank, spanned the river, but pack-ponies found surer foothold and saved their masters toll by wading the ford.



THE KOREAN POST-OFFICE, GENSAN. [*To face page* 10.

Peering into the huts as we threaded the long, straggling street of the village, I observed an occasional chest of drawers, painted a bright yellow, with handsome pierced plate-iron clamps or hinges of considerable size. These bureaux correspond to our old coffers or dowry chests, being made for the reception of the trousseau of the Korean bride. My cupidity was aroused. I could not transport a bureau, but I might compass the portage of some hinges. A Japanese official was appealed to for information, and a youthful guide and interpreter was added to our "staff." He wore a most extensive rush or bamboo hat, which for three years forms part of the mourning costume. It resembled an inverted flower-pot, with five scallops around the edge. So huge was it that I found myself calculating how many gallons of water it would hold were it water-tight, and manfully resisting the temptation to knock on the outside to inquire if the owner were within.

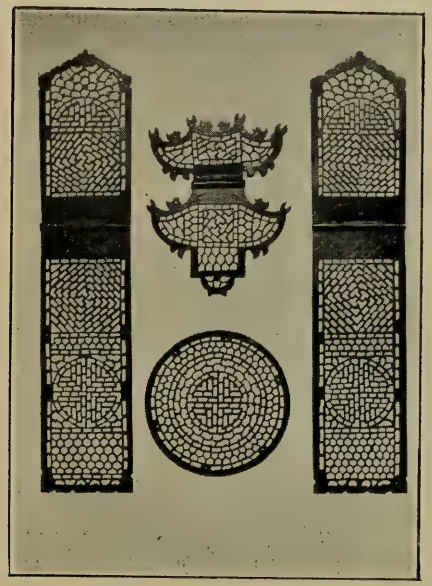
We had now a small cavalcade of the "unattached." For about a mile and a half we proceeded thus by the "High Street," which threaded its way between the huts. From the neighbouring heights these must have looked like a collection of ant-hills. Korean gentlemen were stalking proudly down the street, or under the influence of the noonday heat had retired to rest on the floors of the small rooms, or lay partly in the street. Halting before one of these huts, and withdrawing the hanging mat, I found to my satisfaction a man squatted on the floor making hinges.

But there was need for a considerable stock of patience. What mattered it to the Englishman if the steamer did leave without him? Life is not worth living if you have to rush through it as do these foreigners. In the first place the difficulties of language had to be overcome. The Consul's secretary understood English and Japanese, and two of our youthful party claimed to know Japanese, but I would not vouch that they knew more than their numbers

in that language. It took some considerable time to make the Korean craftsman understand that I wanted to buy some of his hinges. Then the question of price was evidently a poser. Why, I do not know. Whether he was wont to barter with his neighbours, or did not sell them alone, but only affixed to the bureaux, or was staggered at the prospect of getting a hitherto undreamt of price from the "foreign devil," I cannot tell. The guide said he had no fixed price. It was evidently a serious business this, of making up a price on the spur of the moment, and we must give the poor man time to think. Finally the verdict came—800 mung for one pair of hinges, at least so it was interpreted to me. It sounded a great deal, but 600 cash coins being then the equivalent of a Japanese yen (2*s.* 1*d.*), the price was about 2*s.* 9*d.*, probably at least twice as much as a native would pay, but not exorbitant in my eyes.

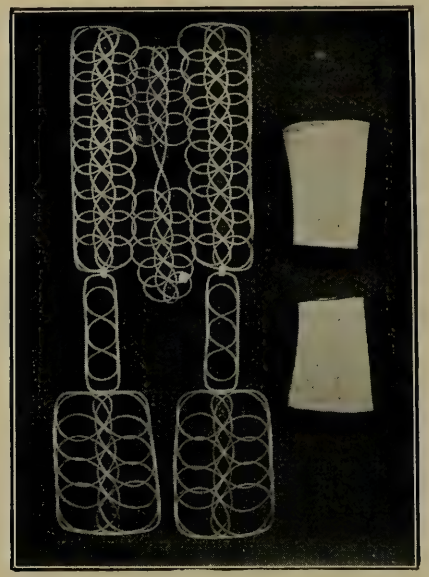
When I proceeded to pay for two or three pairs, I remembered that I had only Russian money, and therefore a long squabble ensued as to the relative value of a ruble and a yen. In the East the former was worth a fraction more than the latter at that time, but an authority in the shape of another tradesman was called in to pronounce. By this time a large audience of Korean gentlemen, hard at work (!) smoking their pipes, had arrived on the scene; but, notwithstanding, one shopkeeper averred with delightful impartiality that Russian money was cheap, and he would give me 80 sen (100 sen = 1 yen) for one ruble, at the end of a battle, we agreed to regard them as equivalents, and I proudly walked off with my hinges, the purchase of which had been nearly a whole morning's work.

On my way back I passed a coolie carrying money—Korean cash—on his back. The Korean cash is a similar coin to the Chinese, and in size is between a farthing and a halfpenny, but thinner than either. In the centre is a



KOREAN BUREAU HINGES.

KOREAN HAT-BOX.



KOREAN BAMBOO UNDER-VEST AND HORSEHAIR CUFFS.

[*To face page* **12.**

square hole, by which it is strung on straw ropes for convenience of carrying. In journeying into the country one must employ a man to carry one's money thus, or if it be for more than a week a mule will be necessary. A missionary whom I met made a fortnight's journey from Fusan, and took with him 10,000 cash, and he could hardly have been blamed for extravagance, for he had barely 35*s.* for his expenses.

Silver and nickel coins have recently been put into circulation, but in the country it would be more difficult to change them than a five-pound note in a tiny English village.

A few evidences or survivals of a past civilization were forthcoming in the Korean's wardrobe. I obtained some beautifully woven horse-hair cuffs, under-vests, and hats. The object of the two former was to keep their white linen from contact with their perspiring bodies in the heat of summer. Less expensive substitutes were made of bamboo. What might we not be saved in England in both purse and temper if we could dispense with the services of the laundress and wear bamboo underclothing!

The conventional headgear of a Korean gentleman is an expensive item, for he will pay as much as £2 and £3 for a horse-hair hat, with which to cover his precious top-knot. Another refinement is noticeable in an oiled paper folding cover, which is worn over the hat in the rain, making of the whole a picturesque, conical-shaped head-dress. This latter and a large hat-box of oiled yellow paper on a bamboo frame, handsomely painted with Korean characters, were just as inexpensive, costing the equivalents of 1*d.* and 6*d.* respectively.

As we made our way back to the boat we passed the village fields of millet (*sorghum vulgare*) stretching away to the foot of the hills, and rising from out their midst the little stagings so familiar in China and throughout India. This stork-nest kind of erection is the family "look-out"

from which to warn off grain pilferers of the biped class, both feathered and featherless. It is extremely hard work, but absolutely necessary, if a farmer has several small scattered lots, to keep watch day and night over the wide area. He is not safe even from relations, for it is said that poverty is so great "that it is necessary to work all day and steal all night to make an honest living." The harvest, however, was not yet ready, and neither the watchers nor the poorer women whom the strenuous battle of life renders impatient of the restrictions and seclusion of their richer sisters had arrived on the scene.

If the Korean coolie has not the reputation for industry and energy at home, it is quite otherwise in Vladivostok. Probably it is the energetic, the venturesome, who have emigrated, but even so they are measured against a similar class from China and Manchuria. The most obvious explanation is that under Russian rule their earnings are their own, whereas in their own country they are liable to be squeezed, hence nothing is to be gained by persistent industry and thrift, for that would mean an invitation to official despoliation.

CHAPTER II

AT VLADIVOSTOK

Russia, Japan, and Korea—Vladivostok—Siberian hotels—Search for an ice-free port—Tariff imposition and its results—Difficulties of travel.

FROM Gensan north to Vladivostok is a twenty-four hours' steam, the boundary between Korea and the Russian Empire (Primorsk) being passed at the mouth of the river Tumên, about ninety miles before reaching the latter town. The Russian maritime province of the Primorsk and Korea are conterminous, save for the river, for a few miles inland, thus squeezing Manchuria into a wedge-shaped piece which fails to reach the coast. Hereabouts the great rugged scarred mountains give place to sloping hills, which fall gently to the sea.

This contiguity of Russia has had a great influence on the attitude of Japan towards Korea. After the negotiations, in which Japan, at the close of the Chino-Japanese war, was prevented by Russia, Germany and France from acquiring any territory on the Chinese mainland, feeling ran high in the Island Empire, and there remained the impression in Europe that Japan might soon come to blows with Russia over Korea. The rapid and abnormal increase of Japan's navy, and the supposed need for the latter to attack Russia before her trans-continental railway was finished, made a rupture, to European eyes, imminent. As time went by, and Japan joined with the Powers in the Peking expedition, these fears were somewhat allayed,

but not dispelled, as was evidenced by the refusal to lend Japan money to prevent the financial crisis of 1901. And yet, all the while, politicians in the West were labouring under a misapprehension. Notwithstanding all our boasted rapidity of communication, the telegraph and the press, distance counts for very much as a factor of ignorance. Youthful Japan was fired with patriotic enthusiasm, and we heard the echoes of their rampings in the press, but meanwhile the older heads at the helm knew and realized fully the true situation. As one of them remarked to me, "What is there to go to war with Russia about? Korea? We are *settled* in Korea—witness our merchants, our own settlements at Fusan, Gensan, etc.—just as truly as Russia is in Manchuria. It is as futile for her to attempt to turn us out of Korea, as for us to evict her from Manchuria. Moreover, we older heads realize that to go to war with Russia would be to stake our very national existence on one throw of the dice."

This is interesting in the light of later events. Statistics corroborate the strength of the mercantile position of Japan in Korea. Whereas there are (I quote from the figures of 1901) 16,142 Japanese in the country, the Russians number only 97. Sixty-five per cent. of the shipping trade is Japanese, and it is they who are constructing the railway from Seoul to Fusan. Foreign correspondence is mainly done through the Japanese post-offices, and, as I found, the Korean coinage was largely supplemented by Japanese paper-money.

It is obvious, however, that with the absorption of Manchuria, and the acceleration of communication by the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern railways, Russia's position for an attack, commercial or military, is greatly strengthened. She has certainly possessed herself of another weapon, viz. her power to menace the independence of Korea, which, like her attitude towards Afghanistan, she finds so useful in the game of bluff.

Nagasaki had been left on August 14, and Vladivostok reached on August 5. I do not mean that we had performed the journey in minus nine days, but that Russia is still thirteen days behind the rest of Europe in her kalendar; and some of her writers would have us believe that she is not even this much behind the West in civilization.

Vladivostok is picturesquely situated at the head of a narrow inlet in the Muraviev-Amursky peninsula. This inlet was first discovered by an English naval captain in 1856, and named "Port May;" but it has been rechristened by the Russians, Zolotoy Rog, or Golden Horn.

To the south, the peninsula is separated from "Russian Island" by the Eastern Bosphorus straits, and on the west and east is bounded by the Gulf of Amur and the Ussuri Gulf.

Threading the straits, our vessel entered the Golden Horn, and shortly afterward the town came into view at a bend of the coast. Its situation on the hilly slopes of a haven with many ramifications, is certainly picturesque, and had it not been for the total destruction of the trees, the site would have been truly beautiful. The houses showed painfully new in the brilliant afternoon sunshine, and jostled each other in higgledy-piggledy fashion. The white stone cathedral stood out glaringly against the red-brick merchants' warehouses; but most prominent of all on entering the harbour were the fortifications and barracks. These were visible in all directions, overflowing into encampments of white tents. On prominent spurs big guns were mounted, and the next morning I counted eight Russian ironclads at anchor.

Vladivostok has a population of between 40,000 and 50,000 inhabitants, of whom about half are Russians, and the rest Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, with a sprinkling of Europeans and Americans. From the point of view of

buildings, it is still the finest town in Siberia, for while Irkutsk, the Paris of Siberia, as it has been called, boasts only a few public buildings in brick, the rest in wood, Vladivostok possesses several streets of brick and stucco buildings. At the same time, a Siberian town is always full of contrasts. Imposing buildings line a road which would disgrace an English farm. The trottoirs are of wooden planks. Substantial erections jostle wooden shanties. Hotels, illuminated with electric light, offer the traveller filthy floors, and beds with no bed-linen, and charge him extra for the use of a towel! Telegrams were exceedingly cheap, but there was no knowing when they would get to their destination. The Vladivostok banks allowed twenty-five days for the transmission of money by telegram to St. Petersburg in calculating interest; and the bank manager, a Frenchman, at Nikolaevsk, at the mouth of the river Amur, told me that it once took him forty days to get a wire through to the capital. He was dependent on a single wire for a great distance, and this is not infrequently brought down by floods or a storm. The accident having been located and the repairs at last completed, there is an accumulation of official telegrams which take precedence. An "urgent" telegram of mine once lay undelivered on the counter of the telegraph-office at Vladivostok for ten days, and for this triple prices had been paid, in addition to the reply.

A foreign resident, who spoke Russian and was a friend of the Governor of Vladivostok, told me that it took him sometimes two hours to get an "urgent" telegram accepted at the office, and then he had the satisfaction of knowing that it might have to wait for a sufficient number to accumulate before it was despatched to its destination.

You are fortunate if you do not arrive to find yourself at the end of a queue of people waiting. The clerk's attention at length arrested, you hand him your telegram.

He glances at it, and calls "*boyka*," * and orders "*stakan tchai*" (a glass of tea). This brought, he discovers there is no sugar, and recalls the boy and scolds him. Again he glances leisurely down the telegram, and begins to turn over his book preparatory to making several copies of it. Between whiles he pauses to drink tea, and at length summons the boy again, this time for cigarettes and matches. And so time wears on and your patience wears out, for time is no object to the Russian, and he would characterize our adage, "Time is money," as either madness or low principle.

Nevertheless, improvements on the line of travel march quickly even in Siberia, especially since the Manchurian railway has been completed, and it would be unfair to post-date the above picture. I have recently received a cable in England from Vladivostok in twenty-four hours.

As I have mentioned, the rates are very cheap, and special efforts are now made to get telegrams from or to Europe put through rapidly, and without murdering the English or German spelling more than the officials can possibly avoid.

As regards hotel accommodation, so obvious was the lack of a decent hotel that a large building originally designed for offices was going to be adapted as a "hotel run on European lines," so that in this matter also ere now, the above description, while still true of most Siberian towns, ought no longer to be so of Vladivostok's best hotel.

Banking arrangements were not much in advance of the postal and telegraphic. In the East, whether it be at Hong Kong, Shanghai or Yokohama, one expects to spend half an hour in getting a letter of credit cashed, but I was warned that in Siberia it would be advisable to leave one's letter in the morning and call again in the afternoon. Even so I heard of the following incident with some surprise. A foreign merchant stepped over to the

* Pidgin Russian for "boy."

Russo-Chinese Bank in Vladivostok to deposit a few thousand rubles. It was just after 9 o'clock in the morning. It seems scarcely credible, but by 12 o'clock he had got the matter finished! A London cashier would have settled the matter in less than two minutes. There was a passing backwards and forwards to different departments. In some the official was busy and delay occurred, then finally after quantities of paper had been used and much ink had flowed, the signatures of two directors were required, and only one was present. The other had his own office elsewhere, and had to be found.

It would be of course quite absurd to expect Western smartness in Vladivostok, and in fairness we ought to compare it with other towns in the East, where life is taken easily; but even so it suffers by contrast.

The Russians after all are only slowly developing a commercial class. In 1861, they possessed no middle class, the nation consisted of the aristocracy and the serfs. They were an agricultural people, and the Jews were doing what little trade and commerce existed.

I once asked a Russian official, "How is it you do not allow the Americans or English to go up to Kharbin (in Manchuria) to trade?" "Why," he replied, with the greatest candour, "they are so quick that they would capture all the trade before we Russians had a look in."

This patriotic feeling is having some curious results. As I write, M. de Witte, the Russian Finance Minister, is as anxious as Lord Curzon to encourage manufactures and industrial developments, the one in Russia, the other in India. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, M. de Witte sees possibilities of increased revenue in flourishing manufactures, but we may credit him as we do our Indian Viceroy with the desire to render the large mass of people less dependent on agriculture, and therefore less subject to famine.

The Russian Minister has not hesitated to invite English

capital. I sometimes wonder whether his emissaries have informed him that his underlings in Eastern Siberia, consumed with the natural desire of "Russia and Siberia for the Russians," are doing their best to oust the foreigner.

The imposition of the tariff at Vladivostok has been a handy weapon, and under this pretext heavy fines may be inflicted for non-observance of intricate regulations, the duty on an article new to the import list stated on preliminary inquiry to be so much may be raised to five times the amount on the arrival of the consignment, and the previous statement disclaimed.

Restrictions are hemming in enterprises more closely, but these press scarcely more heavily on the foreigner than they do upon the native, and are dictated by an empty exchequer. With care and a careful observance of the regulations laid down, I am inclined to believe that profitable ventures may yet be made by foreigners in Siberia. Greater care is needed in dealing with local officials, and I suspect that most of the troubles the foreigner encounters are not due to the policy of the Government, but mainly to new weapons of bureaucratic peculation.

But to resume my story. Having been visited on board by the medical and police authorities, and no objection taken to our passports, a sampan, rowed by a Korean, took us ashore, and landed us in the market, or *bazar*. Here we plunged into a medley of nationalities, Chinese, Manchu, Koreans, Japanese, Golds (an Amur tribe), Russians, and, not to be mistaken anywhere, a group of gipsies.

A Russian naval officer had already warned us that the hotels throughout the empire were "abominable and dear," a generalization about as true as most. There are certainly exceptions in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and one in Siberia at Blagovestchensk (kept by a Frenchman). But at Vladivostok, the biggest, the "Tikiy Okean" (the Pacific Ocean) hotel, with its dirty floors and its *café chantant* from midnight until 4.30 a.m., was to be avoided.

Fortunately, through friends, I found a quite "tolerably clean" hostelry in the Moskovsky Padvarey, a family hotel which had nothing, however, to boast of in its restaurant, for the same friends, when they stayed at it, had been wont to go out to a "patissier" to obtain their breakfast. I fared boldly on, even after I had to give up my one hope—eggs, which I began to suspect were "made," if not "in Germany," at least in China.

Meals, I must confess, especially in more out-of-the-way places later on, were a difficulty in the Russian Empire. The Russian revels in things tart and acid, and does not object to chunks of food. Sour cream and small cucumbers or large gherkins played a great part in Siberian menus. At dinner and supper the latter regularly appeared, while the soup contained a great cubical chunk of coarse beef. It is only fair to say that the Russians do know how to make soups, for these when well made are rich, thick, and tasty. Vegetables of all kinds abound in them, and make this first course to a Westerner almost a meal in itself. Perhaps the national soup, which was the first viand placed before me in the Russian Empire, would scarcely appeal to an Englishman. It was swimming with chopped vegetables of all kinds, including cabbage, beetroot, carrot, turnip, etc., and contained the usual solid piece of beef, on the top of which rode a portion of sour cream, and, to crown all, a lump of ice.

It was not without adventures that we reached the Moscow Inn, for our *izvostchik* persisted in driving us to the Moscow Restaurant, which was situated in the lowest quarter of the town. On the way we encountered some drunken Russian sailors, ashore for the Sunday holiday, who were having a free fight in the street. Since leaving Port Said, with the exception of Peshawur, I did not remember to have been in such a rowdy place ; but we were helped out of the difficulties our driver had plunged us into by a fellow Britisher, who ran us to earth in the

hole in which we now found ourselves and explained the mistake. Then he asked me, "You carry your six-chamber?"

"I have it in my bag, but I suppose reports are exaggerated, are they not?"

"Well," he replied, "I hadn't been here a week when, in broad daylight, at two o'clock in the afternoon, I heard shots. I ran up a yard, and there saw a woman lying on the ground shot, and a man reloading his pistol. I seized him, calling a Russian passer-by to my assistance, and we handed the culprit over to the police."

As the American rather forcibly put it, "You don't want your revolver often, but when you do you want it —— bad."

After the summer heat of Japan, Vladivostok is quite a relief, for though it is situated on lat. 43° 6′ and lies south even of Florence and Nice, it experiences a cold winter and not an excessively hot summer.

The winter is fine and dry, and the summer free from the troublesome dust-storms of Peking. South-east winds laden with moisture prevail in summer, and fogs occur in May, June and July, but the months from October to March are quite free from fog, and European residents from Japan, Shanghai, etc., come up here to avoid the heat of August and September. The monthly average temperature ranges from 5° Fahr. in January to 69° Fahr. in August.

In winter the harbour is frozen from the first week in December until the last in March, and the Japanese mail-steamers cease to run for two or three months, although there are ice-crushers in the port. Otherwise it is a fine almost land-locked haven, and could ride any Far Eastern Fleet, though the natural position is scarcely a defensible one.

The town has spread not only along the Golden Horn, but over to the shores of the Gulf of Amur. Land has risen rapidly in value; and one gentleman whom I visited

told me he was paying for his flat of six rooms on the first floor of a two-story wooden house £180 per annum.

The port has made very rapid strides. However, the recent imposition of a customs tariff, and the determination of the Imperial Government to make Dalni, which is less than thirty miles by rail from Port Arthur, the great port of the East and the direct route to Japan is already being felt in the older town. It is the old story of the long scheming for an ice-free port which has at last been fulfilled.

Petropavlovsk, in Kamchatka, at one time a naval station and the scene of the repulse of the Allies in the Crimean War, is to-day a village; for it had to give way, after the cession of the Amur in 1858, to Nikolaevsk, which was henceforth the naval base of Russia in the East. In 1872 a removal was again made to Vladivostok, a site over which we are told tigers roamed but a few years before. To-day Nikolaevsk wears a partially deserted air, though the process of decline has been arrested by the discovery of gold on the Amgun river. Finally, Vladivostok has to-day to give way to Dalni, which, according to Russians, is to become the greatest sea-port of the East, and to dwarf Hong Kong!

There was no question that Vladivostok up to the time of the imposition of the tariff had been making great strides; but already the baneful effect of this was evident, and since then matters have gone from bad to worse. M. de Witte has been bombarded with petitions from the Vladivostok Chamber of Commerce. To the injuries sustained from the tariff imposition, trade was also suffering from the competition for the Manchurian trade of the then free ports of Dalni and Port Arthur. Such were the delays and troubles of custom house formalities, that goods in transit for Manchuria were diverted to these ports, and for Sakhalin and North-Eastern Siberia to Japanese ports. Local industries dependent upon imported raw material

have been killed off, and the effects have been felt throughout the Primorsk, though the chief cause of depression in that region was the diversion of the traffic to the Chinese Eastern (Manchurian) Railway.

I fear that the social life of few eastern ports would bear looking into, and perhaps Vladivostok less than most. At most of these the disease of the social body was decently hidden, but here it was thrust upon you. Even more than these others it is a place where men congregate from various parts of the earth to do business, to make ventures, but whither their women-folk do not generally follow them. At the last census, of all towns in Siberia this had the smallest proportion of females to males, viz. 15·6 per cent. In so distant a spot, amidst a strange environment, amongst a mingling of different beliefs and customs, where it is easier to cast all away than to find common ground, tradition and convention are thrown to the winds. And this is not confined to unknown people, for you learn afterwards, with a shock, that the officials and persons of distinction with whom you have been dining are leading exponents of this life.

In pursuit of my plan to get to the island of Sakhalin, I turned to the genial American Consul, Mr. Greener, who kindly assisted wandering Britishers. Quite recently a British commercial agent has been appointed ; but at that time the Americans outnumbered the British residents, as now, I believe. It was at the house of one of the former that I met an interesting American Episcopalian clergyman. He was certainly not of the ordinary type, and combining as he did a love of sport with his more serious pursuits, his travels had taken him into various parts of the world, including Japan and South Africa. Mention of the latter led to an interesting story about Cecil Rhodes, which is quite worth repeating. Dr. Z. confessed that as a public man Rhodes had not attracted him, but personal contact with the man had quite changed his

opinion of him; thereupon he told us the following story:—

"The first occasion I was staying with him," said Dr. Z., "was at the time of the Matabele War. Carrington's troops had not been able to effect permanent results owing to exceptional difficulties, and Rhodes had gone out unarmed, parleyed with the big chief, and arranged a peace; but as yet the smaller chiefs had not given in. Every day he and I rode out into their country; but after the first day I asked him to lend me a gun. He said, 'What for?' 'Oh!' I said, 'I have seen some leopards and should like to shoot one; besides, you yourself admit that these smaller chiefs are not to be trusted.' 'Well,' he replied, 'you know our troops could do nothing with these tribes in their natural fastnesses, and I must depend solely on moral influence. I have agreed with these big chiefs for a peace, and I want to show them that I trust them.' 'But,' I asked, 'why not carry a revolver in your pocket, no one would know, and I confess I should feel happier myself?' 'My dear fellow,' he replied, 'my servants know everything that is in my baggage, and everybody else would soon know also. Besides,' added he, 'if we were attacked on one of these narrow ledges what could we do? We might send a few of these fellows to their account, and certainly in the end be killed ourselves; and would you feel any better for having to render account for a dozen natives?'"

From Vladivostok my intention was, if possible, to visit the island of Sakhalin, and then traverse Siberia to Europe. My original plans were based on catching a coasting vessel putting in at Sakhalin on its way to Nikolaevsk on the mainland; but one of these had left a few hours before I arrived. This was annoying, but I guessed that if I took the train by the Ussuri railway, that isolated piece of line which connects Vladivostok with Khabarovsk on the Amur, and made connexions with a

steamboat down the river to its mouth, I might at Nikolaevsk yet catch the coasting steamer on its return, and hope for its calling at Alexandrovsk in Sakhalin. Of course I must take my chance of being allowed to land. As will be seen, this plan did not wholly succeed, but perhaps it was as well.

But even with success assured there were other difficulties which I wished to avoid, if possible, by carefully laying my plans beforehand. In the first place, no reliance could be made on the dates of sailing or of connexions in so-far-out-of-the-world a place as Sakhalin or Nikolaevsk. If I left the island before the Straits of Tartary froze I could get some vessel or other to take me to Nikolaevsk, and so by steamboat for 2025 miles, frost permitting, to Stretensk, the terminus of the Trans-Siberian railway. The Manchurian railway, which might have been an alternative, was still in course of construction. There was one alternative for the first stage of the journey as far as Khabarovsk, for I might by catching a steamer to Vladivostok again take the Ussuri railway to Khabarovsk, and from that point ascend the Amur to Stretensk, a distance of only 1402 miles. Perhaps the choice of these routes reads rather like deciding to go to Paris *viâ* Calais or Boulogne, but it was scarcely so easy or reliable a performance.

Four Germans landed with me at Vladivostok, intending to cross Siberia. I asked them, "Did they know their route—that it was highly important to get influence to bear to obtain a berth on the steamboat at Khabarovsk before leaving Vladivostok?" They asked, "Where is Khabarovsk? We never heard of it before!" They had come from Japan with the idea that they merely had to take a ticket at Vladivostok and be whirled away to Europe! I referred them to compatriots of theirs, the great merchants Kunst and Albers, whose ægis, I trust, was all-sufficient.

Friends of mine, who had been well posted up, spent twelve days in Vladivostok obtaining the promise of berths on the steamboat at Khabarovsk, and when, two days later, they arrived there, these had been annexed by officers, who always take precedence in means of communication and transport. However, they got away in a tiny steamer shortly after, and spent twenty-nine days on board ascending the Amur and Shilka, sometimes on sandbanks, and sometimes returning to fetch a third barge, that had to be towed! The Amur journey, under favourable conditions, should take about twelve days, but the river is very fickle, and while Dr. Z. had come with scarcely a hitch (perhaps Prince Khilkov's name was all-powerful, not only with the officials, but with the river deity), others had experienced unheard-of difficulties. One's own countrymen told of crowded boats, of camping in the gardens of an hotel waiting for connexions, of first-class passengers, even ladies, sleeping thick on the deck, and of one steamer passed that had spent eleven days on a sandbank.

Arrived at length at Stretensk, I should have four days' train and boat to Irkutsk, whence thrice a week a train *de luxe* accomplished the 3390 miles to Moscow in eight days. But my difficulties would be over if I could make sure of getting so comparatively easy a journey as this.

What I had to fear was that the river Amur or its tributary the Shilka would be frozen somewhere *en route*. The steamboat would, as is usual, remain where it stuck for six months, and the river being insufficiently frozen for sledging, for nearly two months I might be stranded at some lonely Siberian emigrant settlement on the Amur, lucky if a poor *stantsiya*, or post-house, would give me shelter, black bread and *shtchi*. The uncertainty as to when the river would freeze, the doubt as to whether the last steamer would take days or weeks, and if the latter, when it would be frozen up, were insoluble even by the

one or two people I sought out who had lived on the Amur. "Was it possible," I asked, "to cover the 1400 miles between Khabarovsk and Stretensk supposing I got frozen up?" The only alternative suggested was to buy horses on the spot, and get a Kazak * to accompany me as guide. This was almost impracticable, because I should require too many pack-horses for my effects and food, not to mention the likelihood of parting company with one's baggage in swimming semi-frozen tributaries of the Amur, or in an encounter with *brodyagi* (escaped convicts).

It was clear, therefore, that if I wanted to spend Christmas in Europe, and not in Siberia, I must make sure before crossing to Sakhalin of being able to catch a river steamboat at Nikolaevsk that had ample time in which to reach Stretensk before the Amur and Shilka began to freeze.

This promised a very short stay on Sakhalin, but events turned out otherwise.

* This and not *Cossack* is the correct transliteration of the Russian word.

CHAPTER III

FROM VLADIVOSTOK TO KHABAROVSK

The railway journey—The Ussuri region—The terrible massacre at Blagovestchensk—Stories of eye-witnesses—Khabarovsk.

THE Ussuri railroad, by which I was to reach the river Amur, is 475 miles in length, and connects Vladivostok with Khabarovsk.

This line, which was finished in 1897, was intended to be the last stage of the Trans-Siberian railway traveller's journey. Starting from Moscow, and having reached and crossed Lake Baikal, he would then use the Trans-Baikalian line as far as Stretensk, and thence the (as yet non-existent) extension of that line along the banks of the rivers Shilka and Amur *viâ* Blagovestchensk to Khabarovsk.

This was still, at the time of my travel, the route for the Trans-Siberian traveller, with this difference, that the journey of 1402 miles between Stretensk and Khabarovsk was accomplished by steamer and not by train.

The reason of this abrupt termination of the railway at Stretensk was due to negotiations with China; for in the autumn of 1896, the Russo-Chinese Bank and the Chinese Government entered into an agreement whereby the former was to form a company for the construction of a railway through Manchuria, connecting the Trans-Baikalian portion of the Trans-Siberian railway with a branch of the southern section of the Ussuri railway at Pogranitchnya.

The point of departure from the Trans-Baikalian line

has been shifted more than once in the official plans, and reports vary even in authoritative publications. The junction station for Manchuria is neither Chita nor Nerchensk, Onon, Kaidalovo nor Karimskaya, but a little station called "Kitaesky Razyezd" (Chinese junction), sixty-eight miles beyond Chita, going east. This new line, which, as I write, is now available for trans-continental traffic, effects a saving of several hundred miles over the originally projected route by the Amur.

The Ussuri railroad borders the Gulf of Amur, then keeping to the east of the river Suifun as far as Nikolskoy, which is the junction for the branch-line joining the Chinese Eastern (Manchurian) railway at the frontier, makes for Lake Hinka, or Khanka, which it leaves from fifteen to thirty miles on the left. After this the Ussuri river is crossed by a bridge of 840 feet, one verst (two-thirds or ·663 of a mile) beyond Ussuri station, and rather less than halfway to Khabarovsk. Thereafter the line follows the right bank of the Ussuri, keeping at a tolerably safe distance from the flood area, until its junction with the Amur at Khabarovsk.

It was at 9 a.m. on the morning of August 24, 1901, when my train started out of Vladivostok with eight corridor carriages, including a buffet-car. An ascent up the valley of the Suifun river had to be accomplished, and notwithstanding our two big Baldwin (American) locomotives, these gradients were crawled at about three miles an hour. From the top of this ascent an average speed of twelve miles an hour was maintained, the line wisely dispensing with engineering feats of skill, going round hills and avoiding river-crossings as far as possible. Of course, there are no tunnels; in fact, between Vladivostok and St. Petersburg there are but two and these very short; one is near Zlatoust and the other in that mountainous region, Trans-Baikalia. In the course of a year, the traveller from Europe to Vladivostok, Dalni, or Peking will

be able to note four exceptions to this rule on the Manchurian railway, which are at present avoided by zig-zags and reversing stations.

Passing, as the Ussuri line does, along a valley, the scenery is mainly meadow-land, virgin pasture, with scrub and scantily forest-clad undulating hills, occasionally approaching and receding. Mountains are visible from the line in the distance, but the great range of the Sikhota Alin bordering the coast lies from 80 to 150 miles to the east.

The immediate region of the railway is scarcely typical of the rest of the country with its rugged scenery, wild Tungusian peoples and its brigands. In the valley of this river, Kazaks had been established for years to defend the frontier between Manchuria and the Primorsk, and they had been followed by other emigrants. Thus, all along the line the land is settled for at least one-third of the way, as far as Spaskaya, but by no means closely settled. There are patches of cultivated land and occasionally some cattle to be seen by a river's edge. Seldom is a cottage to be descried, more seldom a village. Sometimes, when the train drew up at a station, one could make out a so-called town about two or three miles off, and pick out one by one the whitewashed wooden cottages, two or three brick houses of officials and, towering above all, the cupola of a church.

The colonization of the district was begun in 1855, but proceeded slowly owing to the great difficulties of travel and transport. By 1897, the population of the Primorsk region, which has an area of just under 716,000 square miles, or nearly seven times that of New Zealand, had not attained to one-third of the number of that country's inhabitants. Communication has improved of late, and considerable inducements have been made by Government, but the number of emigrant families from Odessa in 1898 totalled no more than 578, and even from this must be

deducted leakages, for in 1900 and 1901 a reverse stream was to be noted, as immigrants were becoming emigrants, and returning home across Siberia. It seemed strange that they should be willing to throw up the chance of a freer life than they could ever hope for in European Russia, under a climate that was not more inhospitable; but it will appear less so when we remember that the Russian peasant loves companionship, and picture to ourselves the awful loneliness of outlying settlement life. It is true that in Russia his village may be isolated by long distances, but within his village he finds a world of fellowship. Then, too, he has not the stock of energy of an Anglo-Saxon. Hampered by want of sufficient capital, and confronted by considerable natural difficulties, he gives in, where others of a race less stoical to suffering, but more energetic, would win.

Although the Ussuri district is rich in flora, and the vegetation good, agriculture suffers from a delayed spring and a wet summer. In July and August come the monsoon winds, as we may call them, from the south-east, laden with rain from the Pacific, preventing the ripening of the crops, while spring lags at the heels of the frost and impedes an early sowing. The great Lake Khanka, with an area of 250 square miles, is frozen from the first half of November until the first half of April. Oats, wheat and rye are grown, and less commonly, buckwheat, millet and barley, but the quality of the crops is poor and the fields very weedy. An analysis of the imports of Vladivostok for this and the Amur region shows a proportion of 15 per cent. of corn and flour, which is in itself a sufficient comment, when we think of the large available arable area and the scanty population. Grazing is more successful, and it is said that each household owns on an average eight or nine head of cattle and two or three pigs and goats, but the standard of quality of these leaves much to be desired.

As I looked out on the scenery I was reminded of New Zealand, and the development of that country. How different the results! True, the latter had had many advantages, a more agreeable climate and a start of at least fifteen years in colonization, but it had its disadvantages also in the large areas of thick bush, which even to-day can only be cleared with great labour. Little did these Russian settlers know of the huge difficulties of clearing New Zealand bush, nor had they to burn off the wild grasses, nor clean and nurse the land through several seasons before they could sow the grass from home that would yield good feed for sheep. Here in the Ussuri country large areas of rich meadow-land await the herds of cattle. The explanation is surely this, that New Zealand has had sturdy, restless members of the Anglo-Saxon race, and many a younger son of gentle family with a moderate capital seeking his fortune and carving it out, whereas in the Primorsk poor emigrants without capital and ex-convicts with less hope have been imported to struggle with nature in a wild mood.

The scenery altered little as the train entered on the northern section of the Ussuri railway, save that the valley opened out into a wider plain. These great stretches of meadow-land seemed to invite American methods of agriculture. Many a stream rising in the Sikhota range, far away to the east, was hurrying across the plain to join the Ussuri, and as we crossed them I was reminded of the Norfolk Broads, for their banks were gay with meadow-sweet, white campanulas, gentians, Michaelmas daisies and spiræa (*S. betulæfolia?*). The trees, which at first were mostly oak, ash, willow, walnut, hornbeam and cedar, gave way to birch and spruce, and then to the elder, larch, elm, maple and acacia.

To the north forests were more frequent and settlements less so. Our train was making up for lost time, for at the end of twenty-four hours we had averaged fifteen

MEMBERS OF THE GOLD TRIBE.

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miles an hour, making no allowance for some moderately lengthy stoppages.

The stations were well built of wood, sometimes of brick, and occasionally stood well back from the line, with a garden between.

Curiously enough the station names were painted in Slav characters, which for an ordinary Russian are more difficult to read at a glance than old English characters would be for us.

The halts were fully made use of by the third-class passengers to procure food. As the train steamed in, a few women, barefooted, with kerchiefed heads, were to be seen hurrying from the railway-workers' huts with aprons full of victuals—eggs, roast corn (maize), cucumbers, beans, even cooked fowls and rude pots containing milk. A lonely sort of life this, of two or three families at a wayside station ; nothing but forest and plain, with no companions for miles, but not to be compared with that of those who had no passing trains to break the monotony, albeit they did arouse envy of the happy travellers bound for home.

At Bikin, which we reached about 7 o'clock the next morning, I descended into the midst of some natives, members of the Gold tribe, who had attained to the exalted rank of railway porters. They made picturesque figures, especially their women, who had their two pig-tails *retrousées*, bound with cord and adorned with many coloured glass beads and shells. Their dress consisted of smocks bordered with various gaily coloured cotton stuffs, and strung round with "cash" coins, and leggings similarly adorned.

A Russian colonel of the railway staff, seeing my interest in them, politely offered to get the chief of the Golds and his wife, who were on the train, to pose for a photograph. It appeared that the chief had become semi-Europeanized, but judging by the extraordinary and gaudy attire of the wife, who looked like an Indian squaw in loud-coloured

shawls, she could scarcely claim to belong yet to the Russian "intelligenti."

Until he had reached Bikin, the ordinary traveller could hardly have realized that he was passing through the country of the Fish-skin Tartars. To the east and to the north live these wild tribes, hunting and fishing and maintaining their strange old traditional customs and ceremonies, of which I shall have more to say later on. And though with the Orotchons or Oroktis, the Golds and the Gilyaks, the custom of clothing themselves in fish-skins, which gained them their name of Yu-pi-ta-tse with the Chinese, is going rapidly before the advent of the Manchu trader with "ta-pu," or Chinese cloth, yet I myself have mixed with Gilyaks and Orotchons who still wore fish-skin garments and who did me honour by spreading a rug of fish-skins for me to recline upon.

Occupying the *coupé* facing mine was a fellow passenger of whose familiarity with these parts I was glad to avail myself. He was a Canadian of Russian descent, settled at Vladivostok, and now travelling as far as Blagovestchensk on the Amur. In the course of our conversation he showed me with some pride a new rifle. "I don't mean to be caught napping again," he said. I asked him what he meant, and it appeared that he and another Britisher, whom I had already met, were in Blagovestchensk at the time of the panic and the terrible massacre of the Chinese by the Russians. One had heard so many reports at second hand of this shocking affair, that I eagerly embraced the opportunity of correcting former impressions. If all were true that I had heard, this was the greatest blot on the record of any civilized Power during the last century, not excepting the terrible massacre at Geok Tepe twenty years earlier.

To go back to the events of the previous year (1900), there seems no doubt that the outbreak in Peking came as a complete surprise to the Russians in Manchuria.

Railway employees and settlers fled precipitately before the advance of the Chinese forces, and embarking helter-skelter on the Sungari, made their way up the Amur to Khabarovsk and Blagovestchensk; thereupon the few troops that could be spared from these towns were hurried up the Sungari to Kharbin.

This left Blagovestchensk partially denuded of soldiers. Now, on the opposite or south side of the Amur, was the Chinese or Manchu town of Sahalien, or Heh-lung-kiang, and twenty-four miles lower down, the town of Aigun. One Sunday afternoon, as Mr. S., the other Britisher, was walking on the "parade" along the river, shots were fired by Chinamen from the opposite side. A few Russian soldiers were bathing at the time, and one was hit, but only slightly, and during the whole of the supposed bombardment of the town, not a single Russian, according to reliable reports, was wounded in Blagovestchensk. The suddenness of the attack in Manchuria, and the fact that all but a few soldiers had been withdrawn from the town, threw the inhabitants into a panic. At once they besieged the authorities, and ransacked the shops for arms. Even so, there was great scarcity, and the town was policed by men carrying axes. Out of a population of about 30,000, 5000 or 6000, including many servants, were Chinese. Under the circumstances, perhaps it was not surprising that the inhabitants of Blagovestchensk should suspect a plot between the Chinese on the Manchurian side and their compatriots in the town. What was to be done? They were harbouring the enemy within their gates—in their very homes. The authorities telegraphed to the Governor-general at Khabarovsk for instructions, and it is said that his reply was, "Kill as in war." Whatever that meant, it certainly would not be interpreted by an officer of a civilized nation as the slaughter of defenceless inhabitants.

Outside the town, in the neighbouring villages, were about 25,000 Chinese, and it was felt that they might at

any time attack the town. Kazaks of the Reserve were sent out, and those of the Chinese who had not fled were simply massacred, and their homes burnt; and Mr. S. afterwards saw with disgust the Kazaks prodding the dead bodies.

Meanwhile, trenches were hastily dug around the town, and a thin line of defence formed by volunteers, but the pressing question was, what was to be done with the 5000 or 6000 Chinese in their midst? They must be driven out, and not only driven out, but the river must be put between them and the Russians. To send them over in boats was to give the unknown Chinese forces on the other side means of crossing and attacking the town at close quarters. At last orders came, it is disputed from whom, to collect and drive the Chinese to a narrow part of the Amur above the town, where they were to be ferried across. The scenes that followed were heart-rending. The proprietor of the Grand Hotel, a Frenchman, had to give up his Chinese concierge, a faithful servant, who had been with him for seventeen years; a rich old Chinaman, who had had considerable transactions with the Russians, many of whom had received striking kindnesses at his hands, was hurried along in the crowd of doomed ones. Arrived at the river, no ferries were there, and a panic seized the small force of Kazaks who were driving the 5000 to 6000 wretches before them. It has been said by Russian officials that rafts were made; or was the order given, and not carried out in the excitement? At the point of the bayonet the defenceless victims were forced like a flock of sheep into the river. Many, said an old resident on the spot, were tied together in fours by their queues, and driven up stream. How many thus met their sad fate has been disputed, some saying 3000, others 10,000, but the number given by this same resident was 5300 driven into the river, of whom perhaps fifty or sixty, he added, reached the other side.

"TRENCHES WERE HASTILY DUG AROUND THE TOWN" (BLAGOVESTCHENSK).

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The current bore the dead bodies down past the town, but so many lodged on the banks that, for sanitary reasons alone, men with long poles were sent down at night to prod the corpses off into mid-stream. The river banks for weeks after were strewn with swollen bodies, lying in some places over one hundred together. Many travellers, including an American professor, have testified to this awful state of things; but we may refer to an unwilling witness in the person of General Gribsky, who, in endeavouring to cow the inhabitants of Northern Manchuria, issued a proclamation (*Times*, September 25, 1900), in the course of which he boasted that "the water of the Amur is polluted by masses of dead bodies of Manchus."

A much more detailed account of this terrible affair has recently appeared in the Russian journal *Zarya* (Dawn), by one who signs himself "Eye-witness."

I give here a brief outline of it, as it supplements and explains the reports of my informants, from which it differs but slightly; while I have purposely kept the two accounts separate, in order that the reader may form his own judgment from independent testimonies.

This writer refers, in the first place, to the withdrawal of troops to the Sungari river, but adds that, roughly, about 1000 regulars were left in Blagovestchensk. Ammunition, however, was short. The disturbed state of Manchuria found echo in the breasts of the inhabitants, and a meeting was called, but the authorities did not share these feelings, and rather laughed at their fears.

Meanwhile, at the Manchu village of Sahalien opposite, the inhabitants could be seen drilling, mostly with obsolete weapons. Messengers were sent over to inquire what this meant, and the reply was that no offence was intended, but owing to the disturbed condition of affairs they were only making their town secure.

At this time, a steamboat or two arriving from Khabarovsk reported that they had been hit by stray rifle-

shots of the Chinese on the right bank. Nobody, however, had been hurt. (If one refers to the *Times* telegrams of the autumn of 1900 from St. Petersburg, there will be found an account of bombardments, artillery attacks on the steamers, and a glorious campaign! Our Russian writer characterizes these "official" telegrams, without qualification, as fiction.)

Meanwhile, the Chinese in Blagovestchensk, who numbered, according to this writer, about 3000 or 4000, mostly merchants and servants, also became alarmed at the anti-Chinese feelings aroused, and in fear for their own safety, sent a deputation to the Governor of the town. He pooh-poohed any notion of danger. In the light of later events we know they had only too much reason to fear; but what is not easily understood is, why, if there was no such bombardment, as *official* telegrams afterwards led us to suppose, the Russian inhabitants were in such a panic. This our Russian eye-witness goes on to explain, to clear up the mystery that has reigned here (but not in Blagovestchensk, for it is no secret there) over this sad affair. He says a number of the most unscrupulous inhabitants, in league with the police officials, immediately took advantage of the fears that first arose, fanned them to a flame, and then, under cover of "definite measures," proceeded to do their dastardly work. And why? In order to spoil the Chinese merchants, and to absolve themselves from all debts to them under cover of war. It is even said that many of the shops were previously honeycombed so that, on the expulsion of the Chinese assistants, the wares might be abstracted. The popular fear having been sufficiently worked upon, the terrible work of "defence" began. Harrowing scenes were enacted on the river-side. All the Chinese in the town were hauled out with the exception of perhaps forty. To their credit, some of the richer Russian merchants did their utmost to save their faithful Chinese servants, and by bribing or

disguise succeeded in saving a few from the awful fate of their companions.

The wretched victims, men, women and children, cripples, and mothers with babes in their arms, were driven to the water-side—some begging not to be killed in this dog-fashion, others entreating to be allowed to pray before being slain, and yet others falling on their knees and raising hands to heaven, offered to embrace Christianity if only they were spared ; but one and all, mothers and children, old men and cripples, received the one answer, a watery grave or cold steel. Rifles and sabres were busy, and if a wretch hesitated to plunge into the hopeless waters, he was immediately bayoneted. This, our writer remarks, is called in the official despatch, "an offer to go over!"

This slaughter continued for days, and some of the methods adopted are characterized as worthy of the Inquisition.

The clergy and the "intelligenti," disgusted at heart, adopted an apologetic attitude, for they dared not openly criticize the action of the party who were in league with the police. They excused the deed by the assertion that "if they had not attacked first they would have been attacked."

Meanwhile, the object of the unscrupulous section and the police was clearly seen ; and our writer states that not merely underlings, but high officials, were implicated. The deserted shops and godowns of the Chinese were surrounded, and simply looted under guise of protection. Money and valuables were shared between the police and the unscrupulous, rumours having been carefully spread that gunpowder, arms and dynamite had been found in the Chinese quarter.

It was an open secret that *this* administrative official and *that* police officer had netted so many thousands of rubles, even the Russo-Chinese Bank officials being

mentioned by name in this matter; and I happen to know that this is a matter of common talk in Blagovestchensk to-day.

Their ghastly work completed, on August 3 the Russians crossed the Amur and took Sahalien, which they immediately fired, the blaze illuminating the country at a great distance for two nights. They then advanced into Manchuria, slaying men, women and children, first violating and then killing the girls; and when any criticism on the action of the Russians is made in Blagovestchensk to-day, the reply is, "Read the horrible doings of the German, French and English soldiers in China, and don't forget the German Emperor's address to his troops."

In judging the Russians in this terrible matter, it should be remembered that this happened in a very far-off part of their dominions, that such a thing could scarcely have taken place in European Russia, and that at the time a minority of Europeans inadequately armed, were surrounded by thousands of Chinamen who, if they had attacked and captured the town, would have committed the most horrible and inconceivable barbarities in torturing and killing their victims. Yet when all is said that in fairness should be said in palliation of this lamentable occurrence, it remains a terrible blot on the records of a Power which is always claiming to be included within the comity of civilized nations.

To return to the adventures of the Canadian and Englishman whose unpleasant experience did not end in Blagovestchensk. Disgusted with the state of affairs and anxious to get back to Vladivostok, they determined to run the gauntlet.

With two or three Russians they planned to escape to Khabarovsk, which is rather over 600 miles down the river. A tarantass and horses were bought, and the chief of the police, although he gave his consent, warned them of the madness of their venture. At the last moment the

Russians backed out of it, and the two were left to carry out their plans alone.

Outside the town they found ruined and charred villages, and sights too horrible to mention. They came upon a Russian who was boasting of having killed three Chinese, and at the moment was actually feeding his dog on one of the bodies of his victims. When remonstrated with, he said he could not get him other food. I have seen a photograph of pleasure-parties of Russian ladies and officers picnicking among the corpses of the razed village of Sahalien.

Continuing their journey, the two Britishers found the post-road and the Russian villages in a disturbed state. At the best of times the food to be obtained at an Eastern Siberian *stantsiya* is scanty, but now they suffered the actual want of it. Their horses had to be left behind, and others were not forthcoming. Skirting the river they found a deserted "dug-out" (native canoe), and ventured in this light craft on the current of the great Amur. They were obliged to hug the northern or Russian shore, but even so they had to proceed with great care lest they should be shot by the Chinese on the southern shore, or in mistake by the Russian sentries on the northern.

Eventually, worn out by all they had gone through, they reached Khabarovsk, and finally Vladivostok, where their friends would scarcely credit their story of escape, such were the reports of the terrible state of the country at the time.

To return to the Ussuri railway journey, Khabarovsk was reached in thirty-one hours, and my fellow passenger and I were met by two Americans, one of whom, the manager of a store there, was in the habit of assisting wandering Anglo-Saxons, and at the same time of enjoying a chat with a passing countryman, before winter locked him up from the outer world for six months.

As usual with the Ussuri railway stations, the town

was distant some two or three miles. A couple of droshkies were hailed, and in these we lurched and bounded and all but overturned as they sped along a broad, muddy, and deeply rutted track. To add to the excitement of the drive some Golds, gaily clad and looking much like Red Indians, had filled to overflowing another droshky, and were enjoying the fun of forcing our *izvostchik* to race them.

Khabarovsk, or Khabarovka as it was called until 1893, was founded as a military post in 1858 by Count Muraviev-Amursky. The name was chosen by him in memory of Khabarov, a great explorer, who in 1651 descended the then unknown Amur,* and chose this spot at the confluence of the Ussuri and Amur for his fortified camp.

As we have already seen, Russia's naval base in the East was transferred from Nikolaevsk to Vladivostok in 1872, and eight years later the administration of the Pri-Amursky region was also removed from the former to Khabarovka. This town had become a junction on the line of transport from Europe and Siberia to Vladivostok, effecting a short cut as compared with that *viâ* its older rival. Also in winter, while Nikolaevsk was cut off by an unnavigable frozen strait, Khabarovsk was accessible from the south by sledges on a post-road, and over the surface of the Ussuri. Since 1897, the latter has had the additional advantage of the railway south.

In 1884 came yet another promotion for the youthful town, the "Pri-Amursky Oblast," or Amur and Maritime region, including the island of Sakhalin, and the littoral including Kamtchatka, *i.e.* from Korea to the Arctic Ocean, was cut off from the Oblast of Eastern Siberia, and a Governor-general was appointed with his residence at Khabarovsk. His house is seen in the illustration.

As the traveller from Europe approaches the town by

* Poyarkov discovered it seven years before (1644).

STATUE OF COUNT MURAVIEV-AMURSKY AND HOUSE OF GOVERNOR-GENERAL GRODEKOV, KHABAROVSK.

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the Amur, a tall statue stands out prominently from amidst the foliage at the bend of the river. It is a striking memorial to a no less striking figure in the history of Siberia. Count Muraviev-Amursky alone in his day realized the future value of the Russian advance in the East. Laughed at for his enthusiasm even by his royal master, he pushed on undismayed, and by organization and diplomacy won in 1858 * the Amur region, *i.e.* the country on the left bank of the Amur from the junction of the Argun to the mouth of the Amur. While China was occupied with the Anglo-French campaign in 1860, he with Count Ignatiev cleverly added thereto the Primorsk or Maritime region, *i.e.* the country lying south of the Amur, west of the Ussuri, and north of Korea.

Seen from the Amur, up stream, the town in summer presents a picturesque appearance from its situation on hilly ground; but my experience of it was under quite different circumstances. Approached from the back under a pouring rain, which lasted throughout my stay, I had a view of vast muddy stretches called roads, and of a far-

* Treaty of Aigun. In the delimitation of the new boundaries of the Russian and Chinese Empires, the French text of this treaty says, "La rive gauche du fleuve Amour, à partir de la rivière Argoun jusqu'à l'embouchure de l'Amour, appartiendra à l'Empire de Russie, et sa droite en aval jusqu'à la rivière Oussouri appartiendra à l'Empire Ta-Tsing." The Chinese text, however, instead of saying the left bank of the sea-going (fleuve) river Amur to its mouth shall belong to Russia, has, "The territory on the left bank of the Amur and Sungari rivers from the Argun river to the sea-mouth of the Sungari river shall belong to Russia," etc.

According to European cartographers, the Chinese text would have given thus early an undefined area of Manchuria to Russia, and Mr. A. Hosie, in his excellent book, "Manchuria," calls attention to this "mistake." It was no mistake on the part of the Chinese, nor did it involve the giving away of Manchuria. It was only a difference of geographical terms. The Chinese regarded the Sungari as the more important river, and the Amur, or Weak Water, as they sometimes called it, as a tributary. From their junction to the sea, the combined river was known to them, not as the Amur, but as the Sungari.

west American township. Scattered over a large area are a few brick buildings, including the fine railway offices, the Governor-general's house, the church and other State erections, and a thousand or more wooden houses, from the merchants' stores to the Manchu's *phânza*. An undeveloped place, like most Siberian towns, yet it had the makings of a fine town, had not Fortune already deserted it in the deviation of the Trans-Siberian route through Manchuria.

The population numbers about 16,000, of whom a quarter are Chinese, Korean and Gold. The males outnumber the females by seven to three.

Life here offers few attractions, a severe winter which lasts for seven months, slender communication with the outside world, a lack of intellectual society, poor homes, and a high rate of living increased by the cost of lengthy transport. The average winter temperature is 7° below zero Fahr., and the average summer temperature 68° Fahr. The river remains frozen from about November 8 or 9 until April 11 or 12.

Such is the "capital of Greater Russia," as it has been rather unhappily termed. Fate has no immediate future for it. Trade and commerce are deserting it, stores have been closed up, and it is scarcely likely that the Governor-general will be able to resist following suit. He cannot afford to remain in a place left high and dry by the retreating tide of commerce, and must place himself on the main line of communications. A great shuffling of cards is no doubt going on, though the secret has been well kept. It would, indeed, be an amusing commentary on the numerous professions and declarations by Russia that Manchuria belongs to China, and that she has no designs upon the integrity of that Empire, if the seat of administration of Russia's possessions in the East should be removed, as is most probable, to a town in her neighbour's territory.

Floundering about in the streets in torrential rains, walking for 300 yards along the planked and fossed footways of the main street in order to find other planks upon which to cross the 100-feet sea of mud, was none too pleasant an occupation, and determined one to lose no time in getting into a pair of Russian top-boots. Things looked as dreary indoors. It is true I had been assigned "No. 1" room in the first hotel, which was superior to anything I had yet seen in Siberia, although I was expected to supply bed-linen. Breakfast was hardly up to this standard, for neither milk nor butter was forthcoming, and I was fain to make the best of dry bread and a glass of tea. For this magnificence I had to pay. My bedroom cost me 13*s.* for one night, plus a charge of 1*s.* 3*d.* for candles, meals of course being extra. There were four tallow candles in the room, of which I had used a small portion of two. This obnoxious if somewhat amusing charge for candles used or unused, not unknown to travellers on the Continent, but fast dying out there, is also doomed in Russia before the introduction of electric light, therefore it behoves me not to allow the following incident to be lost. An English nobleman staying in a St. Petersburg hotel was given a bedroom with a candelabra and galaxy of candles. He had used but a fraction of the number when he came to leave, but found to his surprise that he had been charged for them all, and at twenty kopyeks (5*d.*) each. Putting the unused ones in his pocket he descended the stairs, at the foot of which his departure was awaited by the usual crowd of would-be tip-receivers in a Russian hotel. To their astonishment he presented each with a candle, adding, "These candles are very valuable; they cost me twenty kopyeks each!"

CHAPTER IV

ON THE AMUR

A lonely post—On the broad bosom of the Amur—Village scenes—A 2000-mile sledge journey—Nikolaevsk—A visit to the prison—A night affray—"If he moves, shoot him"—Bound for Sakhalin at last.

MY Canadian-Russian acquaintance had driven straight to the river, and there through influence managed to squeeze on to an already filled boat going up to Blagovestchensk. The river was reported full, which, however, could not have been the case, for higher up, a few days later, steamboats were aground on sand-banks. I was in easier case; there would be no crowded cabins or sleeping on deck for me, as I was bound down the river on the comparatively little used route to Nikolaevsk, or Sakhalin, and "no further." In fact, on the second day, I found myself alone with an official who was, to put it politely, muddle-headed, and at times aggressively so.

The first day our number was increased by one of the Americans met with at Khabarovsk, a Californian. At one of the few villages passed, Malmizhkoy by name, we dropped him. Here the tributary stream was in flood, and he could not get rowed up even in a primitive flat-bottomed boat, but had to wait on the chance of being sent for. At the gold mine for which he was bound, he had no companions but poor Russian emigrants or ex-convicts and a few natives. His Russian vocabulary was

of the meagrest, and there in this out-of-the-world spot in Eastern Siberia, frozen up for seven months in the year, he had spent a whole year without seeing a person to whom he could talk freely. Living like this on poor food, mostly fish, he had fallen ill, and in a state of depression had determined to throw up his post, but a ten days' stay at Khabarovsk had recuperated him, and he was now ready to face another winter's banishment. A superintendent engineer for an old-established English gold-mining company, with its offices—it did sound rather odd—in Token-house Yard, he had not always been stationed so long in one spot, but had travelled in the Okhotsk district among its many wild tribes, the dog-Tungus, the Manguns, the Koryaks, and the Chukchis.

How impossible it is to convey the impression this mighty river makes upon one! If we include its main tributary, the Argun, it is over 3000 miles long, and navigable for steamboats as far as Stretensk on its other great tributary, the Shilka, *i.e.* for 2050 miles.

At Khabarovsk, which is 650 miles from its mouth, it is more than a mile wide, and on the way it opens out, spreads into many channels, forms islands, and in some places broadens to five or six miles in width. A wonderful sight is this vast expanse of water, with a low-lying black line on the horizon, encircling us as if we were in the centre of a great lake.

Four days I spent on this great river, with the delightful feeling that one was moving ever into the unknown. The banks were low and swampy, lined with willows, and backed by limitless forests of birch, poplar and larch. No hills were in sight, only miles upon miles of forest, untrodden save for the foot of the native hunter or more rarely a venturesome gold-seeker.

The first day was a time of pouring rain and of rough, wind-swept waters, followed on the morrow by a cloudless sky and a still surface. There is yet another aspect, which

I expected to see later, when—frozen hard and ice-bound —a deep white mantle covers it and all the country round, and more than ever makes of the scene one great lone land.

The third day brought us glorious sunshine and hills, for the Sikhota Alin range from the south began to send its spurs as outriders to meet us, and suddenly, at a bend where lies the village of Bor, they pushed their way down to the river, narrowing it to about two-thirds of a mile. At this abrupt bend, a gale of wind met us, and we could make out a storm cone-signal in this wild spot on the top of the towering cliff. The river had become a tossing sea, which lasted for about a quarter of an hour, when almost at once we were in still water again.

At night, a light or two at the head of a swampy islet warned our steersman of the shifting channels, and sometimes by day we would spy the tiny boat of the lantern-trimmer on his lonely round.

Villages were few and far between. We stopped about every sixty miles for fuel, a lengthy business, as we had to turn and head up the river to allow our four barges to swing round and lie down stream. Soon after leaving Khabarovsk we had attached four barges, two of them laden with 300 convicts bound for Sakhalin. A few wigwams of the Gold tribe, and very rarely a tiny hamlet, were passed. The villages of log-huts, each with its brightly painted green and white church and posting-inn, or *stantsiya*, looked their best in the brilliant sunshine, and I forgot the loneliness of the long frost-bound winter, the thousands of miles separation from friends and home. Long boats, made of three planks only, curving high at bow and stern, and copied from the native canoe, pushed off as we anchored a few yards from the shore. They were paddled by rough-bearded men in jack-boots and red *rubashka* (shirt), and women barefooted, with gaily kerchiefed head, or by Golds decked out in their brightly

embroidered toggery. The third-class passengers on our steamboat, mostly emigrants or peasants, leaned over the rail of the lower deck eagerly scanning the contents of the boats. As the latter came alongside, there was a chattering and bargaining and a passing from above and below of greasy ruble notes, bottles of milk, eggs, and slabs of smoked fish two feet long. It was just such a scene, though under a very different sky, as I had witnessed off the Malabar coast of India, where, putting into some palm-girt, sandy bay, canoes manned by semi-naked figures put out to barter with the hungry and thirsty third-class passengers who crowded the lower decks of the coasting vessel bound for Goa, offering green cocoanuts for drink, and stalks of sugar-cane for meat.

At one village the vessel was able to approach near enough to connect the shore with planks, and while stacks of fuel were being slowly transferred to our decks, the women-folk with their babes gladly went ashore, kindled a fire, and made a hearty breakfast on *terra firma*. At another village, the priest, with his long locks and rusty, threadbare cassock, put off to help unload and count the sacks of flour for the winter's supply. The land was too wet here to allow of corn being grown. The poor colonists therefore relied on fish, vegetables grown in their patches of garden, and the produce of their cattle, pigs, or poultry ; and last, but not least, the arrival of winter provisions by the boat. An occasional failure of transport in past years had resulted in terrible privations.

The settlements occupy a mere strip on the edge of the bank, carved out, or more literally, burnt out, of the forest, just broad enough to stand their log-houses on, and to give feed to their cows. In summer the one event of the week is the calling steamer, but in winter even this is denied them. Outside, deep snow covers everything on river and banks alike, and there is nought to be done in

field or garden. Rarely is the sleeping village disturbed by the mails, or by an official travelling in hot haste, who arrives at the little post-station on his 1000 or 2000 miles' sledge journey upon the ice-bound river, changes horses, and is gone as swiftly as he came.

As we glided eastward and ever eastward on the broad bosom of the mighty Amur, to the right and left stretched the same limitless forests, the home of the bear and the deer, with a few huts of the Golds or Gilyaks making the loneliness more lonely by contrast. This, the third day of our river journey, had been brilliant throughout, and now the sun was setting in all its glory. How can one describe a sunset on the Amur! We were floating on a silvery expanse under a harvest-golden sky, on which a celestial hand in gathering had left a few dusky, fleecy clouds. Below stretched an undulating horizon of mountains, limned in black, and between us and them rose an ever-heightening slope, crowned with a fringe of firs filigreed against the steely blue into which the gold was paling.

We had reached and passed Sophisk, where the river, running thus far in a north-easterly direction, suddenly trends north. If the reader looks at the map, he will see that, if this were not so, the Amur would find outlet between Sophisk and Marinsk in De Castries Bay. As it is, it turns north, flows parallel with the coast, and delays its discharge into the Straits of Tartary for more than 200 miles. How narrowly it escapes emptying itself into De Castries Bay is not generally known.

Later on I had opportunities of landing twice in this bay; and there I learned that a hill of only 150 feet separates through water-communication between the Amur and the Straits of Tartary. This does not, of course, represent the barrier to be destroyed to permit of communication by canal. It simply means that natives proceeding from Lake Kizi, into which the Amur overflows at

Marinsk, up a stream which descends from a hill on the east, have only to drag their canoes over a crest of 150 feet, to find another stream running down on the western slope into the Straits of Tartary, near De Castries Bay. Marinsk is about thirty miles as the crow flies from the sea, and a track connects this and Sophisk with the telegraph-station in the bay. Communication is made in winter, so the telegraph-chief at De Castries told me, by dog-sledges. Lake Kizi, which is 27 miles long, has doubtless been formed by great floods on the river Amur at some time unknown.

A fog settled down upon us soon after leaving Marinsk, and compelled us to anchor for the night, for the land on the left bank was low and flooded for miles, and the shifting of currents rendered navigation difficult.

The fourth day our course was north-westerly for twenty miles or so, until we came to a sudden bend of the river at the native village of Tir, whence the river flows due east. At Tir, on some rocks on the hilltop, are strange inscriptions, which have been variously interpreted. Some have asserted that they are Chinese characters, and witness to the ancient limits of that great Empire; others, and this seems more probable, hold that they are a Niüchen or Mongolian inscription of the famous Buddhist invocation, "Om mani padmi hom" (Oh, the jewel in the lotus).

At Tir, a great tributary, the Amgun river, on which there are gold workings, joins the parent stream. Four hours later, on the afternoon of the fourth day, our vessel, casting off its sorry burden of convicts, crept up to the *pristan* or wharf at Nikolaevsk.

Here I learnt to my chagrin that the steamer for Vladivostok *viâ* Sakhalin had already departed, the fog of the previous night having cost me my connexion. Hope dawned again when I bethought me of the mails and convicts, and I inquired how they would be despatched.

"Oh!" was the reply, "We expect another vessel in sixteen days!" If there is one thing to be learnt in the East, it is never to hurry, but to take things as they come. It takes a long time to become proficient, and to cure one's self of the besetting sin of making definite plans. Bred up in the ignorance of the West, I had always regarded mails with awe and respect. Visions floated before my eyes of the daring deed of Mr. Gladstone, stopping the Irish Mail near Hawarden one night, despite all warnings of the signalman, in order to obey the command of the Queen; and of the Pennsylvanian and New York Central railways racing for the mail contracts.

To wait sixteen days was out of the question. "Could I not," I asked, in my ignorance, "cross the river and post down the coast to the narrowest part of the Straits of Tartary (which separate the mainland from Sakhalin), and there cross over in a native boat and continue my journey by post to Alexandrovsk, the chief place on the island?" It was their turn to be astonished now. "You would be killed and eaten by the natives!" they said. I little knew then that impenetrable forests barred my way to Cape Lazarev on the mainland, and that no posting track existed either there, or on the island from Cape Pogobi. That natives might mistake me without escort for a *brodyaga* (a passportless vagabond or escaped convict), and capture, or even shoot me, was just possible, but that they were cannibal was either pure invention or legend born of ignorance.

"No! don't worry yourself," was the advice of the manager of the branch of the Russo-Chinese Bank; "we shall hear if a steamer puts in that is likely to call at Sakhalin, though few do, as there is nothing for them to go for, excepting coal, and the lading of that is always an uncertain business." This did not sound hopeful. Meanwhile, what was to be done? To wait possibly sixteen days, probably more—for dates are elastic in East Siberia—

would involve being stopped by the frozen river at some out-of-the-way spot on the return journey up the Amur. The river naturally freezes earlier at its upper waters than at the mouth. Towards the end of October * floating blocks of ice are met with, and almost suddenly, with little other warning, the steamer finds itself ice-bouud. Six weeks or two months must elapse before the surface throughout its length, in the lower reaches as well as the upper, can be declared safe for *troiki* (three-horse teams, attached in winter to sledges). Heavy snowfalls are experienced at Nikolaevsk and in the coastal region, mainly in December, the white pall lying from three to nine feet deep. Three feet of snow present considerable difficulties to progress, and render it impossible for horses to flounder any distance through it. In December, therefore, the post-master of each little Government *stantsiya*, or post-house, twenty to twenty-five versts (13 to 16½ miles) apart, stakes out a course, with pine branches on the snow-covered frozen surface of the river, when it is sufficiently hard. In doing this he is assisted by the village to village traffic, which is somewhat insignificant it is true, and a narrow track within this course gets beaten down. This done the authorities give notice that the road is open, and a few military officers, and here and there a merchant or engineer whose business will not wait, venture on their long and trying journey. Sledging over the smooth white surface to the galloping of three spirited steeds and the merry peal of bells, sounds a most delightful experience, and so it is if taken in small doses for pleasure; but it is another story when long distances are travelled. In that case you go on day after day, night after night, stiff and sore, cold and numb, seizing the opportunity of the two-hourly change of horses—and of sledges if you have not

* The dates given throughout are according to the English style, unless otherwise stated. The difference is thirteen days, *e.g.* October 8, Russian or old style (O.S.) = October 21, English or new style (N.S.).

been wise enough to buy one—to drink a glass of hot tea, chafing at a delay which, nevertheless, is all too short to get thawed in. By day, by night, unhasting you go, counting the weary versts which, though they speed by at the rate of two hundred a day, seem so slow in mounting to thousands. Then comes a check, and you arrive at a *stantsiya* to find the post-horses already taken by officials. There is nought to be done. The night must be spent here. At least you will have the opportunity of a rest, for hitherto you have had to snatch an hour or two's sleep when travelling on smooth stretches. But peering into the room you find the floor crowded with the sleeping forms of *muzhiki*, and an atmosphere that is staggering. There is not a vacant space, and even if there were, you reflect that if Russians are immune to asphyxia an Englishman is not. Stiff and cold you wrap yourself in furs and elect to pass the night outside. A Russian, whom I met in Sakhalin, and whom I will call Mr. Y., set out only this last winter (January 1903) to sledge this journey which I had just completed by steamer—the 623 miles from Khabarovsk to Nikolaevsk. He was making the journey in the opposite direction, and so bad was the weather that he only accomplished it in twelve days. Soon after he had left Nikolaevsk a *buran*, or great snowstorm, enveloped him, his team, and everything around. The horses struggled on gallantly, the *izvostchik* whipping and urging them on; but the snow grew deeper and deeper as they proceeded, until the poor floundering creatures could go no further. There was nothing to be done but to loose the horses, mount them bare-backed, leaving the sledge and baggage in the snow, and make their way as best they could through the blinding fall to the nearest *stantsiya*. This is slow travelling for sledges, as the mails reckon to cover on the Amur, despite all delays for changing horses, on an average 250 versts, or 166 miles, in the twenty-four hours; while in the journey from St. Petersburg to Yakutsk before railways existed, the

9000 versts (nearly 6000 miles) was performed in twenty-eight days, or at the rate of 213 miles a day. But for long distances such rapid journeys are not to be attempted by the traveller, unless he wishes to become a wreck; it is advisable to sleep at nights where *stantsiyas* offer possible accommodation. Mr. S., the Englishman who escaped from Blagovestchensk, undertook, before the time of railways, the tremendous journey from the Ural mountains to Yakutsk, and managed it in this fashion in six weeks.

In severe winters, however, there are times when the cold at night is too intense for one to proceed. When the thermometer records – 35° Fahr., and your *izvostchik* gets frost-bitten, and the frozen breath of the horses chokes their nostrils, compelling the driver to descend every quarter of an hour to free them, then it is time to give up and wait for the sharp spell to abate.

There was little time in which to decide whether to return at once or run all the risks that delay would involve, for the steamboat by which I had come was leaving in four hours. The question, however, was decided for me, for the berths had all been taken by those who were anxious to return before navigation became uncertain.

The town of Nikolaevsk, in which I now found myself stranded for an unknown period, was founded on August 6, 1850, by Captain Nevelskoy, acting without instructions from headquarters, for it was not until 1858 that the Treaty of Aigun gave this, the left bank of the Amur, to Russia. I have already referred to the severe blow it received when, in 1872, the naval base was transferred to Vladivostok, and again when the administration of the province was removed to Khabarovsk.

The town, which is perched on the rugged slope of the northern bank of the Amur, consists mainly of one broad street or road with one offshoot down to the *pristan*, and a few parallel green tracks. The main street contains half

a dozen well-built wooden structures, including the church, the Russo-Chinese Bank, and some merchants' stores. There are a few shops and residences of officials, the rest are log-houses straggling away into the scrub and forest, out of which the site of Nikolaevsk has been carved. At the foot is the collection of wooden wharves, which in the autumn present quite a busy scene. An Amur steamboat is in, three or four steamers bringing provisions, tea, flour, etc., for the winter are lying in mid-stream, huge lighters, which I am told were made in England, are being tugged ashore, while a small fleet of schooners rides at anchor higher up stream waiting for their annual load of fish for Japan.

Yet Nikolaevsk wears a *triste* look. The two prison buildings, with their dingy, forbidding-looking stockades, frown upon you, and the deserted old rambling wooden houses of the admiral and military officials tell of its fallen fortunes. As I wandered about the place, I could not resist the feeling of oppression in the air. It was, as if the inhabitants were allowed their liberty—a very modified form of it—by the officials, only on sufferance. What a contrast to merry, happy Japan, and the gay village scenes there, and the Japanese pride in their police and military! Of course, it should be remembered that besides officials there were scarcely fifty Russians who were not ex-convicts. This explained the presence of strange-visaged Jehus, whose faces haunted me until I remembered pictures of these Judas-looking countenances, and wrote them down at once as Kirghiz from Trans-Caspia.

By one of these I was driven up in a "fiddle-back" to the chief inn of the place. The "fiddle-back" I should describe without exaggeration as a car specially designed for the discomfort of the passenger. It has a cloth-covered ridge, or backbone, with a step on each side. I proposed to sit astride, on seeing it, *en cavalier*, but I soon learnt that it was customary to squat on whatever space was left by a passenger on the opposite side, and to cling on

as successfully or unsuccessfully as might be, while the horses bounded over tracks that reminded one of a building estate.

At the ramshackle wooden inn of one storey, I again had the honour of occupying "No. 1" room. Two windows gave on to a yard, in which the presence and music of pigs contributed to the pleasures of existence. The room was comfortably furnished for these parts, that is, there were some chairs, a couple of tables and a bedstead, for which I supplied my own bedding. Of course, the floor was bare, and as I found decent food difficult to obtain, I camped out in my room, drawing largely on my stores of tinned foods.

Strolling out in the evening, I met a band of sorrowful women and children, some carrying babes, escorted by soldiers. These were the wives and families of convicts going out to Sakhalin.

This feeling of oppression dogged me still, and I sought relief in wandering on to the neighbouring moorlands, where I could breathe freely, and gaze with forgetfulness on the broad flowing river beneath, and the great forest-clad hills opposite.

It was one of those first impressions which are soon lost. It is strange how quickly one becomes accustomed unconsciously to new situations. Those who have travelled know this well, but those who have not been far from their native land make a great mistake if they imagine that the novel impressions of strange conditions last long. I have gone ashore in Korea, and had to pull myself up suddenly with the reminder that I was not sauntering in a Surrey or Devonshire lane, but that thousands of miles separated me from old England. So it was, that first evening at Nikolaevsk; I returned to the inn, where not a soul spoke anything but Russian, and mechanically sat down with my books, quite unconscious of the 12,000 versts which separated me from London.

The next morning, in strolling down to the wharves at the foot of the town, I came across some rude shanties which I will dignify with the title of market. People were trudging along carrying great circular nine-pound loaves of black bread, or gleaming salmon, freshly caught. I wondered if there was any beef to be had—there are no sheep hereabouts—for the previous day not a scrap of meat was to be obtained. The shanties exhibited a mixed lot of articles. Each was a "Whiteley" on a small scale, decked out with a motley collection—Russian long boots, horses' collars, dirty furs, kettles and hardware, and a toy bagatelle board! Perhaps they tickled my sense of the fitness of things less than the native *bazar* at Darjiling, where, within a hundred miles of the borders of Tibet, and surrounded by natives of many lands, Tibetans, Bhotans, Bhotanese, Nepaulese and Hindus, amid a collection of charm-boxes, prayer-wheels, etc., stood two plaster statuettes of Gladstone and Disraeli!

By the *pristan* were moored some barges, with flights of steps inviting would-be customers to descend. A fox-skin or a pair of felt top-boots for winter's snows, dangled from a line on deck to tempt purchasers. The owners of these are the modern representatives of the old-time pedlars, with this difference, that they travel with a barge instead of a basket. Starting in spring from Stretensk, 2025 miles up the river, and leisurely drifting down stream, calling at the little villages *en route*—a great event in the village economy, especially to the female inhabitants—they finally fetch up at Nikolaevsk, where they moor for the last time. There a trade is done until autumn warns the pedlars to be gone, when, jobbing off the rest of their stock, including the barges, the timbers of which come in useful for trottoirs, they catch the steamer back to Stretensk ere the river freezes. I believe that the corn-barges of Western Siberia and the coal-barges on the Mississippi are similarly disposed of at the journey's end.

I had not been more than a day or two in Nikolaevsk, before I discovered an old white-haired American, who had been a captain in the employ of the long-extinct Russian-American Company, which, founded under Imperial patronage in 1798, played a similar *rôle* to that of the Hudson's Bay Company, until 1868, a year after the cession of Alaska to the United States.

As he was about to pay a visit to a fishery at the mouth of the Amur, near Pronge Point, he offered to take me. For thirty-nine years he had been voyaging in these parts, and seventeen of these he had spent whaling in the Okhotsk Sea, where his home and family were, for he had married a Tungus woman. In those days, when his vessel was frozen up in the Bay of Okhotsk, clad in furs and snow-shoes, he would start out to traverse the wilds of this almost unknown country between Okhotsk and Nikolaevsk. Taking with him a small store of flour, sugar and tea, he relied on his gun for the flesh of deer, wolf, or bear. Such a journey generally occupied about twenty-five days, and often, he said, he went for as many as sixteen days without meeting a single soul.

Now he had command of a tiny steamer which plied up and down the Amgun, taking provisions and fetching gold from the mine, when the state of the river allowed. On the forecastle, just below the bridge, was a heavily clamped iron coffer, which held the gold-dust and nuggets. This, with the rough, drunken, and lawless-looking crew, put the finishing touch to it as the picture of a pirate vessel.

At the mouth of the Amur, the owners of the vessel (the chief partner was the son of a convict) were making the first attempt at salmon-canning in Siberia. The chief occupation of the poor is fishing, and in the month of August, at spawning-time, salmon (*Salmo lagocephalus*) and shad swarm. Some idea of their abundance may be gathered from the fact that the prices fixed by the municipality at Nikolaevsk for a moderate-sized salmon,

say eighteen pounds, was six kopyeks (1½*d.*). Salted, it forms the staple food of the natives and poor Russians. To lack of variety, the absence of vegetables, which will not grow in Nikolaevsk, and the unhealthy conditions of living, must be attributed the leprosy among the Russians on the Amur. A few years back there was no accommodation for these lepers, and many suffered from want of food, or lay untended, but now there is a properly constructed leper-house two or three miles from Nikolaevsk. So plentiful are the fish that I have seen Russians spearing the salmon from the banks; but on the journey from Khabarovsk down the Amur, the usual method appeared to be to build a wattle-weir projecting into the stream, and just visible above the surface of the water. At the mid-stream end was fixed a "set" net, into which the fish crowded as they hurried round the corner. A boatman sat waiting until the net was heavy with its living freight, when he hauled it up, and emptied the catch into his boat. At Pronge, seine-nets were being used, a good average haul of the net yielding 3000. The native village of Pronge is really in the Straits of Tartary, just round the southern foreland at the mouth of the Amur, but the temporary Russian fishing settlement is situated on the right or southern bank of the river just before one reaches the headland. Our little vessel threaded its way very gingerly between the sandbanks and shoals, past the batteries, and then by miles of forest-clad slopes, the home of the bear and reindeer, to the little settlement where the great river broadens out until it is eight miles wide from head to head.

A few log-huts, and a native shelter or two of pine-branches, and a wooden jetty in embryo, told of our arrival at the curing-station. Until then, I had thought our crew were a rough lot, but they were quiet and respectable compared with the ex-convicts on shore. Several boarded our vessel, and three of them burst into my cabin, but satisfied

themselves with staring long at me as though I were a strange new animal, and departed.

On shore we found them busily cutting up and cleaning the salmon before plunging them into the pickling vats. Most of this salted salmon goes to supply Eastern Siberia, the emigrant population, and the convicts, and some is exported to Japan in casks. The scrupulous cleanliness which the English public demands in the preparation of food to-day, and which machinery ensures, could not be expected here.

If similar methods are to be employed in the canning of salmon that were used in the curing of the salted article, then tinned salmon, at least the Russian article, will become a food to be avoided more than ever. The Siberian, I had almost said Russian, is well known for his want of personal cleanliness of living, notwithstanding the weekly bath that we are constantly reminded of. Russian writers may point to this as evidence of the cleanliness of the *muzhik*, but no one can accuse the poorer population—and their number is legion—of cleanly personal habits, and to have your food prepared on a wild spot with no conveniences, and by the lowest rabble of Russia, is sufficient disqualification for the article in question.

We landed a large number of tins of vodka for the men, who would not have worked without it any more than English harvesters without their beer or cider. These were stored for safety in the wooden hut of the foreman, under our eyes, and as I sat on a box watching this operation, I didn't envy the position of that man. What was there to prevent these rough, cut-throat-looking individuals from taking his life and helping themselves?

Outside the scene was a wild though picturesque one. The sun was setting, the broad expanse of water was silvering, and behind us darkness was shrouding in mystery the primeval forest. On the shore strange uncouth figures in great boots and shaggy astrakhan caps were gathering

round the fires. A great pot of fish hung in the flames, and a solitary woman was griddling greasy *blini* (pancakes).

The captain and I put off with a freshly caught salmon to our vessel, and after a repast prepared by the Chinese "boy," I lay down and tried to sleep, the while a drunken party from the shore grumbled and thumped and swore over my head. The next morning, as soon as daylight allowed us, we threaded our way back.

It seemed a comparatively civilized life to come back to in Nikolaevsk, though when told that the single line of telegraph wire has been broken for a week, and that telegrams to St. Petersburg take not infrequently a month, and letters two and a half months, you do not feel in closest touch with the civilized world.

On the following morning, as I was down on the wharf, I found that the convicts, whom we had towed down the river, were being disembarked. Their names, crimes, and sentences were being called out, and the prisoners came forward in turn and marched out of the shed to join their companions, who were lined up with soldiers in front and to the rear of them. As each came forward, I had leisure to examine his face and general appearance. All wore unbleached cotton *rubashka* and trousers, shoes and socks, or strips of cloth wound "putty"-fashion round their legs. Over all they had the *khalat*, or long ulster-like garment of frieze, excepting one or two, who may have bartered it for a mess of pottage.

Some had diamond-shaped coloured patches let in to the back of their *khalati*, the colour indicating the prison district from which they came; yellow, for instance, being the Moscow colour. On their heads were brown frieze caps, and round their ankles chains. These are long but not heavy, weighing barely seven pounds, and they can be hitched up to the waist, so as not seriously to impede walking. On their shoulders they bore their worldly

possessions, in bundles of varying sizes, and in their hands or at their belts were the inevitable samovars or kettles, and pots.

Their faces were not prepossessing, though very few had the villainous features one might have expected to see. I thought I descried some Jews, and more than one follower of the Prophet, these latter, Kirghiz, from Tashkend and neighbourhood. As they came forward to join the lines, laughing and talking or calling to their companions, and interchanging remarks with the sentries, I wondered at the freedom allowed. One raised a laugh all round. He was the solitary proud possessor of a box, padlocked and all, which he bore on his head. A titter went round when a soldier, asking what it contained, the prisoner replied "Gold."

When the 300 had all passed out and ranged up, four deep, facing me, the seventy odd soldiers took up position — right turn — and with a sudden painful jangling of chains, the miserable column moved off and up the street to the prison. One only of the convicts did I see who was without boots. The march was not hurried, and the soldiers considerately allowed the prisoners to pick their way along the muddy road.

Official strictness is considerably relaxed as one gets further east in Siberia. Three weeks before, the famous student Gubermann had arrived, and the inhabitants, struck by his story and his fine erect bearing, which marked him out among the slouching figures of criminals, collected twenty guineas on the spot for him.

His was a marvellous story of imprisonment and escape. According to my informant, and I give the story as he told it me, Gubermann was incarcerated in the Schlüsselburg near St. Petersburg, in 1896, for taking part in political disturbances. Released after one year and a half, he was again involved in 1898, and sent with a batch of students to the Baikal region. They decided to send one of their number with messages to their former companions

in Moscow. The lot fell upon him, and, notwithstanding the truly remarkable vigilance of the Russian police, he escaped, and once more joined in the riots of 1900. Arrested yet again, he was sent to Sakhalin. There one morning I was hurrying past the prison at Alexandrovsk, when I saw a crowd gathering and officials driving up in haste. Going over to make inquiries, I learnt that Gubermann had been creating a disturbance, in the course of which he had accused the Chief of the prison of theft.

His brother exiles thought he was suffering from overstrain. The accusation may have been true, but no good would come of making it, and all might suffer for his ill-timed protests.

The second day after their disembarkation, by permission of the *Ispravnik*, I visited some of the prisoners in their new quarters. Some had been taken to the new, but more to the old prison. The former combined the functions of an *étape* or *perisilni*, and a *gubernski*.

The *étape* is a resting-place *en route* where the prisoners generally sleep two nights, while at a *polu étape*, or half (way) *étape*, they spend one night. A *perisilni* serves a similar purpose, but for a longer time. A stay of weeks or months is sometimes necessitated by irregular communications, or some other reason, preventing immediate continuation of the journey. A *gubernski* is a gaol for local offenders. The new prison was constructed for sixty-seven, but with a few local offenders now contained 120. The old prison was described by Mr. H. de Windt as he saw it seven years earlier, in 1894, as "a rickety wooden structure, rotting with age, and by no means weather-proof. It is now seldom used," he adds, "save for local offenders. I found only nine inmates." This was now crowded out with 300. The Chief of the police did not wish me to see it, as can readily be imagined, and he procrastinated with such success that before I could bring him to the point, I had to seize the opportunity of getting over

to Sakhalin; but the description I received on the spot of the filthy condition of this forwarding station was too disgusting for me to repeat. This state of things was what met the miserable wretches in past years. Hungry and weary after a long day's march, hopeless and fearful, failing the scramble to obtain one of the miserable plank resting-places, they had to lie on the filthy floor, thankful if there a stronger neighbour didn't crush them, for the most brutal-tongued and hard-fisted got the best place, the timid and weak went to the wall.

But this is no longer a true picture of Siberian prisons or *étapes*, or only in very exceptional cases; and here a special cause was at work producing, let us hope, exceptional conditions.

The *ukaz* abolishing deportation was to come into force on January 1 (O.S.), 1902, necessitating considerable alterations in the prison buildings throughout the Empire. There wanted but four months to January 1, and prisoners bound for Sakhalin were being hurried on before the frost set in to block navigation.

Driving up with a Russian companion to the house of the Chief of the prison, we were ushered in. There we waited for a considerable time, during which I suppose finishing touches were being made in the prison for the benefit of the English visitor. At last the chief appeared, and we walked across to the sombre-looking building. A stockade of pine poles, twenty feet high, like gigantic pencils with sharpened ends upwards, formed the outer enclosure, the entrance to which was guarded by saluting sentries. Inside the square was the long prison building, divided lengthwise by a corridor, off which doors heavily bolted and padlocked opened into different-sized rooms or *kameri*.

We entered this building, the prison master, my companion and myself, guarded by three soldiers armed, two of them with bayonets and the other with pistol and sword. The first room which the warder unlocked was small, as

nearly as I could judge 14 × 16 feet, and contained nine local accused waiting their trial for minor offences. They included natives (Gilyaks) and Koreans, and wore their ordinary dress.

Their beds were of sloping planks with straw mattresses and pillow, a dirty-looking sheet and frieze blanket, yet these were doubtless quite as good as anything they were used to. The air was heavy, and in nearly all the *kameri* the iron-barred windows were tightly closed, for the Russian does love warmth.

The next cell contained a very different class of inhabitants, viz. convicted criminals going on to Sakhalin. Some had already been here a long time, others had just arrived the day before. Several of them had rough, repellent faces, with lowering brows, piercing eyes, unkempt hair, and wore dirty clothes, and iron fetters polished bright by much wear. Altogether they presented the picture of abasement. I experienced a curious sensation as the door of the *kamera* was flung open, and the prisoners rose clanking their chains ere the soldiers had time to close around us. The prison master made some remarks, and one man complained that "he had not had a bath for six months, and was covered with vermin." The master flew into a passion, and swore at him. The visit of a stranger is an opportunity for prisoners to make complaints, whether genuine or not, but the behaviour of the master lent confirmation rather than otherwise to the convict's statement, and caused me to take his own remarks *cum grano*, when showing me the bath-house, he declared that the prisoners had baths twice a week.

Another prisoner of gentler disposition, who wore spectacles, asked if he might have his chains struck off, and be permitted to help in the kitchen. His term had expired, and he might have gone free in Nikolaevsk, but what would he have done there in an utterly strange place? He might even have required protection himself.

STRIKING OFF THE FETTERS. [*To face page* 68.

The next room was about 20 × 16 feet, and contained as many as twenty-five. The inmates slept on the floor, covered by whatever their bundles yielded. I asked whether they had a blanket in winter, but was assured that the rooms were sufficiently heated. The prisoners crowded round us, and I learned in answer to questions of the prison master that they had been three months tramping from Nerchensk, 2075 miles, with an occasional lift on barges towed by a steamer.

Just as we were turning to leave, a tall not unpleasant-looking prisoner stepped forward and asked, "Where does the *barin* come from?" "America," replied the master. I corrected him. "Don't they treat the prisoners better in England?" To which I believe the reply was, "No, they hang such as you!"—which was probably true.

Some of the men complained that they wanted more to eat. To this came the indignant reply, "They have plenty, the ruffians!" The regulations for food in Russian prisons are good, and compare well as to quantity with other countries, but the quantity and quality of food which reaches the prisoner is quite another story in far Siberia. There are two causes which tend to bring this about; an insufficient monetary allowance in the face of local conditions, in other words, scarcity or dearness of foods, and "leakages," for which officials are responsible. At Nikolaevsk meat is dear and vegetables scarce, therefore salted fish and black bread form the *staple* diet of the criminals. Owing to the absence of transport during winter, the accumulation of provisions results sometimes in the fish being a year old before it is consumed, and, unfortunately, it is less palatable (I use the word in a comparative sense) to the European Russian than to Nikolaevsk-bred persons.

Knowing this, I was not surprised to find in a small, narrow room, two men suffering from scurvy. They both looked dreadfully sallow, which was partly due to their

confinement, and one of them had been ill since April (it was then August 23, O.S.).

Leaving the *kameri* the prison master showed me the bathroom, whence several prisoners had once made their escape, of whom only one had been recaptured; the exercise-ground, a small grass court with a rectangular and diagonal path, around and across which slip-shod figures were drearily pacing, who, at the sight of the master, immediately doffed their caps; and finally the kitchen, where I met the only free inmate of the prison, to wit, the cat.

It seemed to me that this forwarding prison reflected the normal state of things to-day. There are better, and there are worse. Here, at least, the sanitary arrangements, the state of which is sometimes inconceivable, are probably better than in their own homes. The food is certainly a deplorably weak point, and the absence of variety baneful; and so is the herding together of a mixed lot of prisoners, the lowest type naturally tending to drag the others down; but in judging this state of things, and in condemning the forced inactivity, one extenuating circumstance should be borne in mind, viz. that their gaol is a temporary one, an *étape* in which it is intended that they should stay only a short while.

As the days elapsed I grew impatient to be off to Sakhalin, an impatience only accentuated by the unpleasantness of my present quarters. It was not that the course of life in a ramshackle old wooden inn, with "switchback" floors, whence I could study to my heart's content the life and manners of Siberian pigs, ran too smoothly. On the contrary, there were times when one would have preferred a more even course. Two strolling minstrel girls appeared in the inn for several evenings to regale the *habitués* with music; whence they came and whither they were going in this out-of-the-world place I wot not. I had retired to rest one night while this

"music" was still progressing, when, between twelve and one, I was startled by a big struggle outside in the passage, then a great rattling of the door, and the noise of some one trying to force an entrance. I seized my revolver and waited, but, fortunately, my door was padlocked, and the would-be intruders, whoever they were, soon desisted, and I heard the sound of their footsteps as they hurried down the passage. The disturbance in the neighbouring room, however, did not cease, but continued until it culminated between two and three, when a rush was made for the yard; but fortunately the shutters gave protection against attacks from that quarter.

The next morning I learnt from a Dane, Mr. N., an engineer from Vladivostok, who had been present as a spectator of the previous night's fracas, that three or four of the officers of a small German steamer had come ashore, and had been drinking with the Russians and listening to the harpist. A quarrel shortly ensued as to who should sit next the girls, which soon developed into an international dispute! One German tore part of the beard of a Russian out, another a portion of his coat, and these were flourished around, while yet another drew his revolver. The struggle soon involved them all, and continued down my passage and eventually into the yard; and some of them seemed to have made up their minds, or the soldiers who arrived on the scene had, that the fugitive, whoever he was, had taken refuge in my room.

Meanwhile, no news had reached the bank of any vessel bound for Sakhalin, but one day, observing a strange steamer standing up the river, I made inquiries. The agent, whom I sought out, said that it was a tramp steamer, that it was certainly in want of coal and might put in at Sakhalin for it on its return to the south, and, as a favour, he would take me, but I must say nothing about it. The vessel could not sail for a few days, because the weather was not favourable for unlading. As it was, I do not know

whether he wanted to put me off or not, but the steamer started very shortly and rather suddenly, and it was only through my importunity that late one afternoon I learnt of its intended departure in a few hours. I fled precipitately, managed to get money from the bank in rather under two hours (!), and had packed ready to start at 10.10 p.m. on a dark stormy night in the pouring rain.

A Russian acquaintance kindly accompanied me to the wharf, insisting by the way that my revolver should be transferred from an inside to an outer breast-pocket, in order, as he said, to enable me to draw it at a moment's notice. "My dear fellow," he continued, "you'll have a Chinaman in a sampan, and he may do anything to a stranger who he knows won't be missed. One's sufficient, don't take two. The moment you see him move, fire over his head, and if he attempts it again, shoot him. No inquiries will be made, one Chinaman more or less doesn't matter." The prospect was not pleasant, but it was an incident in travel that one gets accustomed to by degrees. I must confess, however, that I didn't approve of the Russian's ethics. As it was, I had no occasion to solve the question from a British point of view, and to defend myself without mortally wounding the attacking Chinaman; for we found no sampan owners there. It was late, the night was stormy. Our *izvostchik* called in vain to invisible Chinamen on dimly silhouetted sampans.

"Perhaps he is asleep, or peradventure he is on a journey;" and my Russian companion, having adjured the *izvostchik* not to stand there speaking politely, but to go down into the boat and kick the Chinaman, discovered that he *was* on a journey. After about twenty minutes of this, things looked certainly dark. It was towards 11 o'clock; no sampan, my steamer lay somewhere out there in the dark watery waste a mile or more away. I had been told to board it that night, as it was to start early in the morning. What was to be done? At last an

idea occurred to us; a small steam-tug, which had arrived from up the river that day, was lying by the quay. All was dark, but we boarded her, and stumbling over the sleeping form of the "bosun," effectually roused him up; and after wearing down the captain's refusal, got him to agree to allow three of his now sleeping crew to row me out to the German tramp steamer. My baggage was pitched into the boat, and bidding my friend good-bye, I set off, feeling comparatively safe with my Russian crew, who were not drunk, or at least not superlatively so. It was a puzzle in the darkness to single out from the lights of many lighters, fishing-boats and steamers those of the tramp steamer I was bound for, but a guess proved happily correct; and after a mile and a half's rowing we were close under the hull of a vessel from which, in answer to my shout, "Sind Sie das *Tsintau?*" came the welcome, "Ja! Das *Tsintau.*" Scaling the side by a rope-ladder, I at last boarded a steamer bound for Sakhalin.

CHAPTER V

NIKOLAEVSK TO ALEXANDROVSK

A treacherous passage—A lonely coast—Sakhalin at last—I am put under guard—Am I a spy?—Strange story of an ex-convict merchant—A drunken host to the rescue—The terrible deed of a student—Alexandrovsk—An interview with the Governor—A ride to Arkovo and a warning—Armed outlaws—The mail held up—Preparations for a 750-mile journey.

INCOMPREHENSIBLE as it may seem, it was a translation to a land of luxury from Russian fare in a Siberian inn to tinned foods on a German tramp steamer.

At the evening meal we actually indulged in the luxury and novelty of fresh mutton, for the solitary sheep which had been visible on deck in the morning was the only one I have ever seen in these parts. The Russian dislikes mutton, and to keep sheep on Sakhalin would be to feed the bears. Perhaps a menu in the English language, on a German steamer in the far East might be considered a further luxury; but it was only another witness to the fact that English (or rather pidgin-English) is the language of commerce and travel in the Orient, and one soon gets accustomed to hearing the German or Russian captain shouting orders from the bridge in pidgin-English to his Chinese crew.

Our course was to descend the river to its mouth, a distance of twenty-seven miles, then, turning south, to thread the Straits of Tartary for about 120 knots, putting into De Castries Bay on the mainland, and thence to

cross to the island of Sakhalin, which is a sixty knots' journey.

At early morning we began to thread our way through the narrow winding channels of the Amur to the *liman*, or delta-like embouchure of the river, where it broadens out from the one and a half to three miles at Nikolaevsk to eight at the heads. Very awkward and difficult is this passage of the Amur and the northern half of the Straits of Tartary ; and in one place the narrow channel, which gives passage through the treacherous shoals and sandbanks, becomes so shallow that at neap tides only thirteen feet of water is to be found, and hence only vessels of moderate draught can ascend, even with more favourable tides. Similar devious passages, through shoals slightly less shallow, extend to the north and to the south of the mouth of the river, even as far as the 52nd parallel.

Our vessel had therefore to proceed slowly, with anchor ready to drop at a moment's notice, and a look-out was kept for a couple of large lighters, which were said to have been in danger of going aground on a sandbank, as the *Tsintau* was on its way up. The officers made merry over the incident, but it was not always a laughing matter for the poor helmsman on the lighter. Stranded on a sandbank in the dreary delta, with little hope of rescue—for there was no altering a ship's course in this terrible maze of sand—he stood considerable chances of being starved or drowned. Indeed, there were many stories of loss of life hereabouts, and we made out quantities of wreckage at the mouth. The chief pilot of De Castries, who was on board, had many a story to tell of adventures during the seventeen years he had been stationed on this coast. On one occasion the vessel he was piloting was wrecked in the Straits, but with four others he had managed to escape, though without provisions. For four days, he said, they rowed 138 miles (versts?) along this

lonely, inhospitable coast, until exhausted, they reached De Castries Bay.

Darkness descended before we had cleared the narrow channel, and forced us to anchor for the night, and another delay occurred the next morning, when a small tug, at the mercy of wind and weather, begged some coal of us.

We had kept within sight of the coast of the mainland all along. A bold coast it is, with hills of about 1000 feet, rising at De Castries to 1540, and covered with dense forests. A few native inhabitants, Gilyaks, are found just to the south of the river mouth at Pronge and Mi, but otherwise it is uninhabited save by bears, foxes, etc.

At De Castries, a beautiful natural harbour opens out to the view with a couple of islets, Observatory Island and Basalt Island, reposing in the smooth water. This haven was discovered and named by La Pérouse in 1787. There is a small Russian post here, consisting of the dwellings of a telegraph chief, his assistants, and a few soldiers, for the cable to Sakhalin crosses from this point.* I was to set foot here again, but for the present we did not enter the bay, but merely landed the pilot at the foot of the southern headland, some miles from the post, on which stands a fine, strikingly built lighthouse. It is a lonely post, and only occupied by the pilots during the summer, for navigation ceases with the freezing of the Straits.

The dim outline of the Sakhalin mountain range had been faintly discernible soon after we left the Amur, and at the narrow neck of the Straits of Tartary, where they are but five miles wide, the low sandy shore running out from the foot of the mountains was plainly visible.

Our course was now steered east-south-east for the

* This cable, which was broken in June, 1901, has now been abandoned, and a fresh one laid between Capes Lazarev and Pogobi. The post is to be maintained at De Castries, because it has communication by telegraph with Vladivostok, and is the only safe haven for ships passing through the Straits of Tartary.

"isle of the banished," where we arrived, and anchored within two miles of Alexandrovsk, at about 6 o'clock in the evening.

Unfortunately for its development, the island of Sakhalin has no safe anchorage. On the west coast, where the coalfields occur, the sea has a pebbly bottom, and the emerging funnel of a sunken steamer near the beach at Alexandrovsk warns the navigator of the danger of standing in with a shoreward breeze. Indeed, I was fortunate, for often since, I have seen a vessel approach within a couple of miles of the shore, and then reluctantly turn round and flee over to De Castries for refuge from a west wind. However, I was not yet ashore, and the captain's signals for a launch were apparently disregarded. Was there too much sea on for the tiny tugs, which put out to tow the lighters, laden with convicts or provisions, from the incoming vessels? Yes, the captain thought so, and gave me no hope of being able to land. However, he promised to wait half an hour. As a doubtful encouragement he related how recently a French professor (M. Chaillet), making a tour in the East, had arrived off Vladivostok with the intention of returning to Europe across Siberia, and had been refused permission to land. His crime appeared to have been an acquaintanceship made with some Russian students in a German university, and a written promise to visit them *en route* to Paris *viâ* Siberia!

My good fortune had not, however, deserted me, and before the half-hour had elapsed and the captain's patience had been exhausted, a launch put out to us, and, rather to my surprise, I was allowed to board it without question.

I had not, however, mounted the steps of the *pristan*, before a loud official voice inquired where I was going, and what was my business. My very slender acquaintance with the Russian language stood me in good stead. I understood better than I could speak. Partly in Russian,

and partly in German, I made them understand that I had a letter for Mr. Y., who was an ex-convict, a merchant, and acted as agent for the Russo-Chinese Bank.

His was a strange story, which I will tell later. It was evident that I was viewed with suspicion. In fact, recent events all tended to make them think that I was a military spy. Mr. Y. was at the coal-mine, they said, and I must remain in that room (on the jetty) for twenty-four hours at least, and, on his return, they would know what to do with me.

I had been in much worse places than this, and a traveller ought to accustom himself to sleeping anywhere. The main point was gained. I was on the island, and the *Tsintau* was about to depart to coal elsewhere, so the officials might lock me up if they pleased. However, I wanted my books, and going to the door, I found my exit barred by a soldier. Having demanded my baggage, which was brought in, I settled down by the light of the lamp to study my Russian grammar.

At last I had landed on the island of punishment, and for the nonce I was a prisoner myself. As I gazed out of the window seawards, the sun was setting behind a cloud-bank of fiery red as of live coal. To me it pictured the passionate longing of the exiles, whose eyes were straining ever westward to the land of the sunset, to the homeland, the abode of friends and loved ones so long ago left behind ; but whose hopes, like the sun, sank into the dark waters of despair.

Meanwhile, I was called to the realization of my position by the sound of telephoning which was going on between the officers on the jetty and the Governor. I could hear enough to make out that they were talking about me. I was also being watched from outside.

My main object in coming to the island at all was to visit the Ainus, whom I believed I should find more primitive here than on the island of Yezo ; also, incidentally,

I hoped to observe the treatment of convicts on what was well-known in Russia to be the worst penal settlement, the very name of which is not to be mentioned in St. Petersburg.

If the authorities were determined to watch me closely, I, too, would be circumspect. I had, therefore, no need to advertise my secondary object, and to dwell only on my purpose to visit the natives.

It was neither surprising nor unreasonable that I should be arrested and detained while inquiries were made. Twice during my stay rumours were afloat, telegrams had actually been received, I was told, that Japan had declared war with Russia, and my position was rendered less comfortable since it was taken for granted that England was the ally of Japan. Only recently, guns and ammunition had been sent over from the mainland, followed by a Russian major-general, who had held a field-day. There was another reason which in fairness should be credited to them, and that was the protection of my person. Such was the state of things on the island, the number of outlaws and criminals at large, that while the officials might be held responsible for my life, they could not assure my safety. Before I reached the island I had been told that I should certainly be shot, that a pair of boots or twenty kopyeks (5*d.*) was sufficient bait for a convict to murder one, and that on landing after 6 o'clock in the evening, an escort was necessary. I knew from more authoritative reports that there were dangers to be prepared for, but these statements I regarded as considerably exaggerated. My "durance vile" lasted but a few hours. Scarcely an hour had passed, when the door opened and in walked a short, gentlemanly looking man in semi-undress military uniform, who, with a politeness of manner noticeably absent from my previous interrogators, addressed me in English. He apologized for asking me personal questions, but he had been bidden to. I explained that I had an introduction to Mr. Y., and had come to visit the Ainus. Then my

good fortune pursued me. My interrogator, Mr. X., turned out to be himself a convict, the son of a very high official in St. Petersburg, and the husband of the Countess of ——. A highly educated man, speaking English, French and German, besides his native tongue, he was surprisingly *au courant* with English literature. I seized the opportunity of free speech, made all the inquiries I could about the Ainus, produced my maps, and discussed the geography of the island. That my earnestness impressed the under-officials was evident, and they were drawn in to contribute their quota of knowledge. By this time arrived the Chief of the district and Mr. Y. I handed my letter to the latter, and it was strange to see in this tall, fine, military-looking man, well-educated and refined, who addressed me in excellent French—a murderer and convict of twenty years' standing.

His story is well-known throughout Siberia and European Russia. The details differ slightly with the narrator, but the main facts are, I believe, as follows :—He was left an orphan, heir to large estates which the traveller by rail from Berlin to St. Petersburg, *viâ* Eydtkunen, passes. One day he had an interview with his trustee, an old uncle, in which the latter refused to pay a debt of honour, or, as some accounts say, refused his consent to his marriage, and in a fit of anger the younger struck the elder, and to his great misfortune the blow ended fatally. Other accounts make him guilty of murder rather than manslaughter, and of strangling an old servant who attempted to defend her master. Mr. Y. was sentenced to twenty years' hard labour on Sakhalin, where he worked in the mines with gangs of the most debased criminals, and in those early days must have witnessed awful cruelties on the part of the officials, for those were bad times indeed. How he had gone through it, and come out unscathed in manner and carriage, is almost inconceivable. His good behaviour had gained him rapid promotion through the

various stages, and his term had already expired some years ago, but he had elected to remain in a part of the world where he had earned the respect of his neighbours, rather than become an outcast in more civilized society. He is a store-owner and a concession-holder, and his position is peculiar in this, that, while he is regarded by the convicts as one of themselves, he nevertheless enjoys the consideration of the highest officials. Yet this position could not be maintained without considerable circumspection in his attitude to the latter, and perhaps this was why he only offered generally to render me any assistance in his power, although I was without the prospect of any shelter. That he faithfully kept his promise in this, I gratefully acknowledge. However, the question was still to be settled, what was to be done with me. It was, indeed, a puzzle. To me it mattered not, so that they dilly-dallied a while longer, for then the vessel would have gone and they could not send me away.

Suddenly there arrived, post-haste, my and their deliverer from the quandary, in a mud-covered, travel-stained, drunken individual. He had posted from the interior in haste to transact business with the captain of the unexpected vessel, for he was the agent of the biggest German firm in the East. With good-natured hospitality he offered to give me a bed on the couch in his office. The officials discussed the matter and finally made no demur, since I was equally under surveillance there. My new acquaintance, having further imbibed on sea and on shore, was ready to start at 10.30 p.m. After four hours my detention had come to an end, and we were whirled away to Alexandrovsk. The distance traversed was about a mile and a half, and lay first through a straggling pine wood and then through the town. My companion was of doubtful use as an escort, for he had now so much champagne and vodka "on board" as to be stretched full length in the *proletka*,* shouting. I

* A small victoria.

therefore kept my hand on my revolver and peered into the darkness. Here and there I made out a solitary figure standing stationary and rigid, and I guessed that they were watchmen or sentries.

My host was not yet content with the quantity of liquor he had consumed, and notwithstanding all my attempts at dissuasion, an adjournment was made to what was called "the club," where we found several officials just beginning their evening at midnight. They had only just ordered supper, which was to be followed by drinking and cards until 3 or 4 a.m. One, a high officer of the *Kantselyariya* (Chancellerie), in gorgeous uniform of green and gold, sat with his head resting on the table, snoring loudly. It was in vain that the others attempted to arouse him to introduce me, for he remained in that posture until after we left. The night was spent in the log-house of my new and hospitable, if somewhat muddled, acquaintance, and we were well waited upon by ex-convicts, one of whom was a Kirghiz.

The next day opened gloriously. It was September 8, the fields were green and the sea was "brilling" in the sun. I could hardly believe myself to be on Sakhalin. An early caller appeared—it was the interpreter, Mr. X. I had requested him to make application to the chief of the Alexandrovsk district, Mr. Semevsky, to be allowed to become my interpreter. All through my stay I had reason to be grateful to this official, who as *nachnalnik* of the *Alexándrovskiy Okrug* ranked next to the Governor on the island. He spoke French well; and I sometimes wondered if the fact of his sister having married an Englishman influenced him favourably towards me.

It may seem surprising that a convict, such as Mr. X., should be allowed to do so light a duty, and further that he should be told off for my use; but several things had conspired to give him the comparative liberty he was then enjoying. He was not strong, and had been in the

earlier days transferred from his cavalry regiment to the War Office on account of ill-health. On arrival on Sakhalin, he was placed in the prison with criminals, and an attempt was made to enforce his hard labour sentence, but a commission, composed in part of doctors, declared him unfit. He was, therefore, put on half duty, and for some time became doctor in a native village, to and from which he had to walk altogether twenty miles, and later on he was schoolmaster in Due, where he received ten rubles (a guinea) a month, during the school terms, on which to feed, clothe and house himself. His sentence would expire in three months, and these were now the holidays, and partly for one and partly for another reason my application had been granted.

My passport had been produced and given up ; but no one of the officials could read English, which appears to have stood me in good stead, for I was told they were much impressed by the lithographed signature at the bottom, naïvely remarking that here was a person of importance who had a letter from the Marquis of Salisbury !

However, before three or four days had passed, and I was about to set out for the interior, where I should be out of sight and mind, my companion was warned that if I turned out to be a spy his fate would not be enviable.

Slipping my revolver, as bidden, into my pocket, we made our way past the gaily painted wooden church to the house of a student-convict, of whom I hoped to procure some photographs to add to those I proposed to take myself. I could scarcely believe the story of this man when I met him. He had a tall figure, delicate features, and a mass of hair ; in fact, was altogether the artist in appearance and manner. How could he have committed the horrible deed attributed to him ? The son of a general, and at the time a university student, he had joined a society of youths of "reforming tendencies." An outsider obtained somehow or other information which endangered the whole society.

It was determined to compass his death, and lots were drawn, and it fell to this one to do the deed. The victim was thereupon killed, and, horrible to relate, his body cut up and distributed among the members. The murderer was sentenced to twenty years on Sakhalin, of which seven were yet unexpired. He had spent the earlier portion of his sentence in the mines, and now, largely owing to the dearth of educated men, for the officials are only in exceptional cases so, he was installed as meteorological observer. To earn a living he had borrowed money for the purchase of a camera, and executed the orders mainly of the officials. Like Mr. X., he had preserved all his society deportment, though he was nervous, apprehensive and very cowed in his manner, a noticeable result of contact with the prison officials.

The town of Alexandrovsk, or rather *Post Alexandrovskiy*, as it is called, for it has no municipal authority, and comprises a population of only 6000, lies mainly in a hollow at the foot of the mountains, worn by the two streams, the Great and the Little Alexandrovka rivers, which here break the line of sea-cliff for about half a mile. Marshy land stretches between the town and the sea. Two principal streets cross at right angles in the centre of the town, one containing the church, the chief officials' houses and the post-office and leading to the *bazar* or market, and the other, beginning on the hill slopes, continues past the prison down to the jetty.

Though the former street is wide and planted in part with young trees, the log buildings give it a dingy and sombre look. These two streets boast plank "street walks," which the foot passenger does well to avoid at night, owing to the occasional absence of a plank. Outside of these two streets the rest are tracks, wide and grassy, as in all Russian villages, with ditches on either side. The laying out of the place resembles that of a poor far-west American township. Each hut, with its small windows,

THE GOVERNOR OF SAKHALIN. [*To face page* 85.

looking as if it feared either robbers or the cold hand of Jack Frost, had a tiny yard fenced in with a shed forming two sides of the square. In late autumn this little court would be scantily roofed with pine-branches to catch the snow and form a warm covering.

The 6000 inhabitants of Alexandrovsk consist of convicts and ex-convicts, their wives and children, and officials and their families. Besides these there are probably not a dozen free-born individuals, whose business here is that of merchants' agents, etc.

I will not stop here to tell of the life of the place, for I was to experience much more of it on my return from an expedition to the north-east coast; suffice it to say, that the Russian population of the island consists of convicts and officials. Out of a total of the former actually engaged in hard labour—7080 (January 1, 1898)—the murderers numbered 2836, of whom 634 were women. The number of convicts and ex-convicts at the same date was 22,167, so that a moderate estimate would give 8000 of these as murderers.

Lying off the main street, in which stands the church, is the Governor's house, and I now proposed to beard him. My companion was, naturally, very nervous at the thought of the coming interview, and though by this time I was becoming quite Russian in a stoical indifference as to what happened next, and in the frequent use of the word *nichavo* (*n'importe*), I realized that my journey into the interior depended on this interview. If the Governor were drunk or in one of his fits of violent temper, I was assured by all, even by officials, that I should fail, and perhaps bring down his unreasoning wrath upon my head. Mr. Semevsky had allowed me my interpreter; I had now to gain permission to travel in the island, which is entirely under martial law, the military Governor being responsible only to the Governor-general at Khabarovsk. However, again fortune favoured me, and the Governor proved most

courteous, and with true Russian politeness regretted that my projected stay was so short for the object I had in view.

I congratulated myself on finding him in such an excellent mood. On my return he was by no means so compliant, and the higher officials let me know that he was no exception to the generality in Sakhalin, whose indulgence in fits of drunkenness and uncontrollable bursts of temper were taken as a matter of course. It would be unfair not to mention that during the last year there has been an improvement on the part of the Governor. I have received reports to this effect, though to what to attribute the change I do not know. It is, however, true that one cannot expect any great improvement in the administration from his initiative; for he is a man of weak will, and easily swayed. His term has now nearly expired, and I trust he will be followed by no worse a choice, but by one strong enough to carry out reforms; for with a firm but beneficent governor, what might not be done? We have only to turn to the work of the *nachalnik* of the Alexandrovsk Central prison, near Irkutsk, to see.

It must be remembered that the term of official life in Sakhalin is almost as much a banishment for them as for those under their charge; and, excepting to those appointed in the cause of science and agriculture, it is considered as a reflexion. The result of my interview was to leave me free to travel on the island, and I believe the authorities were thankful to have me out of their way in the interior among the natives, where I could of course make no observations on their administration of the penal system. Meanwhile, my passport was retained as a check against any attempt on my part surreptitiously to aid my interpreter in escaping; though, when some 250 miles on my journey, I met two high officials returning from an expedition, I was in the position of a *brodyaga*, or passportless vagabond, subject to arrest, and had to make my explanations.

On the evening of my arrival on the island, in talking about the Ainus, the officials had declared to me that it was impossible to get to them *overland* from Alexandrovsk. The dangers and difficulties at this time of the year were practically insurmountable. This I found afterwards to be true, and as my time was limited, by the fear of being cut off from the mainland by the cessation of navigation, I was forced to give up any attempt which, whether successful or not, would involve the expenditure of too much time. I was the more easily reconciled to this, because the opportunity was offered of visiting another tribe, the Gilyaks. This people, I was told, I might reach in their own domain by a land journey of about fifty miles, and visit *en route* in the course of a river and sea trip of about 600 miles in native canoes. With threats from the chief of the Timovsk district, in which their territory lay, and by openly carrying arms, the officials said, I might safely mix with them. I must be prepared to meet bears, but a greater danger, which they made much of and seemed to think prohibitive, was the escape of a batch of convicts armed. News of this escape was brought by my drunken acquaintance of the first night, who added that this was serious news, for such was the harshness of their treatment, that for a few kopyeks they would kill you, and that in broad daylight in Alexandrovsk. Regarding these statements as probably exaggerated, and soon becoming acclimatized, as any one similarly situated would, to an atmosphere of ready defence, I and my interpreter began to make preparations for an expedition to the Gilyaks on the river Tim, and the north-east coast of the island.

Meanwhile, an opportunity presented itself of visiting a village of this tribe, of the west coast division of the people, who were somewhat Russianized, at Arkovo, ten miles north of Alexandrovsk, along the coast.

A couple of raw Siberian ponies were procured—they had never felt the weight of a saddle before—and we made

for the coast, following the Great Alexandrovka river until it lost itself in meanderings in the sands, and then steering north for the remaining nine miles; Mr. X. warning me to give a wide berth to seals, which had a fondness for jumping up and biting the horses' feet. It was indeed a wild coast, and the cold, grey-green sea, which stretched away to the frozen north, to the Okhotsk Sea, ice-bound for two-thirds of the year, frowned drear and inhospitable. On our right were argillaceous cliffs slipping away, and making descent easy for the brodyagi from the Alexandrovsk prison, who haunted the forests above, descending at night, and if opportunity favoured, by day, to waylay travellers. Keeping together, and maintaining a sharp look-out, nothing happened to us, save that about halfway, our ponies suddenly bolted. At the time we took little notice of it, but that same week a youth was murdered here, who lived in the house we did—in fact, was the brother of our landlady—and at this spot his body, covered over with leaves, was found several weeks after. A rude shelter told of the habitation of the murderer, or one of them who was most likely in hiding here when we passed, and whose presence had scared our steeds.

Arrived at the Gilyak village of Arkovo, to my disappointment the natives had departed for the salmon-fishing, ascending a river higher up the coast to take advantage of the spawning season. We therefore pushed on inland, past the strange native huts built on piles, to the Russian settlement called Arkovo the First.

A stranger from Europe, suddenly dropped down here would certainly ask, "Is this Sakhalin, the dreary isle of punishment, the Hades of Russia?" Outwardly, this village wore a look of contentment, with its cosy log cottages and gardens, in which flourished potatoes and cabbages. Sunflowers I saw also, and was told that wild roses (*rosa rugosa*) perfumed the air in early summer; while away in the distance, forest-clad heights and grand

purple mountains reminded me of some of the finer scenery of Japan.

My interpreter had been schoolmaster here for a while, and as we entered the village, through a gateway intended to keep out straying cattle, he was recognized all along by the villagers as the *barin* who was, like them, a convict, and yet not like them in speech and manner.

Halfway down the "street" he pointed out his little log-hut, where, though one of themselves, he had been robbed of his clothes, and even his wedding-ring, of which we were to hear more afterwards.

Stopping at a rich farmer's (for he owned three cows!), we entered the high-fenced yard, above which were strewn already long pine-poles and branches to catch the snow and form the winter roof. Our ponies being duly hitched up, we ensconced ourselves in the kitchen, which also did duty for parlour and bedroom. A great brick oven, on which the children slept, a wooden structure in the corner, with a bundle of rags on, politely termed a bed, a table, and two benches, comprised the furniture. But I must not omit to mention two mural decorations, the one an advertisement picture of the Tsar, so often met with, even in the most unexpected places, and the other a representation of an equally distant object, machine-made boots. The children gathered round the stranger; and telling them of some of the countries I had visited, pleasantly surprised me with their geographical knowledge.

Our frugal supper over, we thought of returning by the forest road, as the tide was now high, and barred our passage; but our host, who had spent fifteen years on the island as convict and "exile-settler," tried for some reason to dissuade us. We were aware that the forest road demanded defence on two sides, while the route by the sands was only dangerous from the cliff-side; but as we both carried revolvers, and my companion a heavy police one, and were mounted, we still thought we might risk it. Our

host, however, becoming very earnest in his entreaties, Mr. X. remarked to me, "I believe there's something behind this. You know, there's a freemasonry among the convicts and ex-convicts, and I believe he knows more than he dare tell." And to add weight to his warnings, the farmer told us that the *brodyagi* were armed with rifles, for which our revolvers were, he added, no match. To my surprise, I learned from him that the post which travels up to Rikovsk from Alexandrovsk (forty-four miles) every Friday had recently been held up, and this notwithstanding that it carries an armed official, and two soldiers with fixed bayonets. Nevertheless, a few miles out of the chief place on the island, it was stopped by *brodyagi*. One of the soldiers behaved with great coolness and presence of mind. Dropping off the *kibitka*, he crept into a ditch, whence he kept up a fusillade, moving about to deceive his opponents, while the post hurried back to fetch up reinforcements.

This determined us, and as by this time it was already dark, and later than we had expected, we rode off to the sea, hoping that the tide would not long delay us. Threading a mile or so of wood, we reached the sea, and splashing through the retreating tide, finally made Alexandrovsk without hindrance. True, it was eerie work watching, in the dark, the dimly outlined cliffs for the possible forms of outlaws, but we met only one, and he was no match for the two of us.

Not wishing to be a burden to my drunken, but good-natured host, I looked about me for some other shelter. There was no inn of any description in Alexandrovsk, not even for the poorest, but Mr. X. found an ex-overseer of the prison, Mr. M., an honest-faced, good-natured official, in good repute with the convicts, who offered me his spare room. A special effort had been made to provide me with a bedstead. A wooden frame four-square had been procured—perhaps made by a prisoner—and the vacuum was

THE "PRISTAN" (JETTY), ALEXANDROVSK.

AN ATTACK ON THE POST. REPAIRING THE BRIDGE CUT BY THE "BRODYAGI."

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ALEXANDROVSK PRISON AND OFFICES. [*To face page* 91.

bridged over by some box-lids. The choice was to lie on the box-lids or the floor, and I elected to do the former. But let not the reader think this reflects on my host and hostess, who were kindly, simple people doing their utmost to make the stranger comfortable, and the procuring of a bedstead at all was evidence of that. The great difficulty had been to find a place in which my goods and chattels would be secure, and here I was assured they would be.

The next two days were spent in preparations for the journey to the north-east coast of the island, and these took me into the prison offices and about the town in several directions, where much of the life of the place stood revealed. Here I met in so doing gangs of convicts, the worst among them chained, shuffling off to the mines, or dragging trailing loads of wood or provisions; there I saw through the barred windows of the eastern wing of the prison front, convict women and girls at work, sewing. These represented those not chosen as wives by the "exile-settlers," but were really the ones selected by officials for their appearance, though *nominally* to do the sewing and cleaning of the prisons. For it is too true that the majority of the officials live in drunkenness and open adultery.

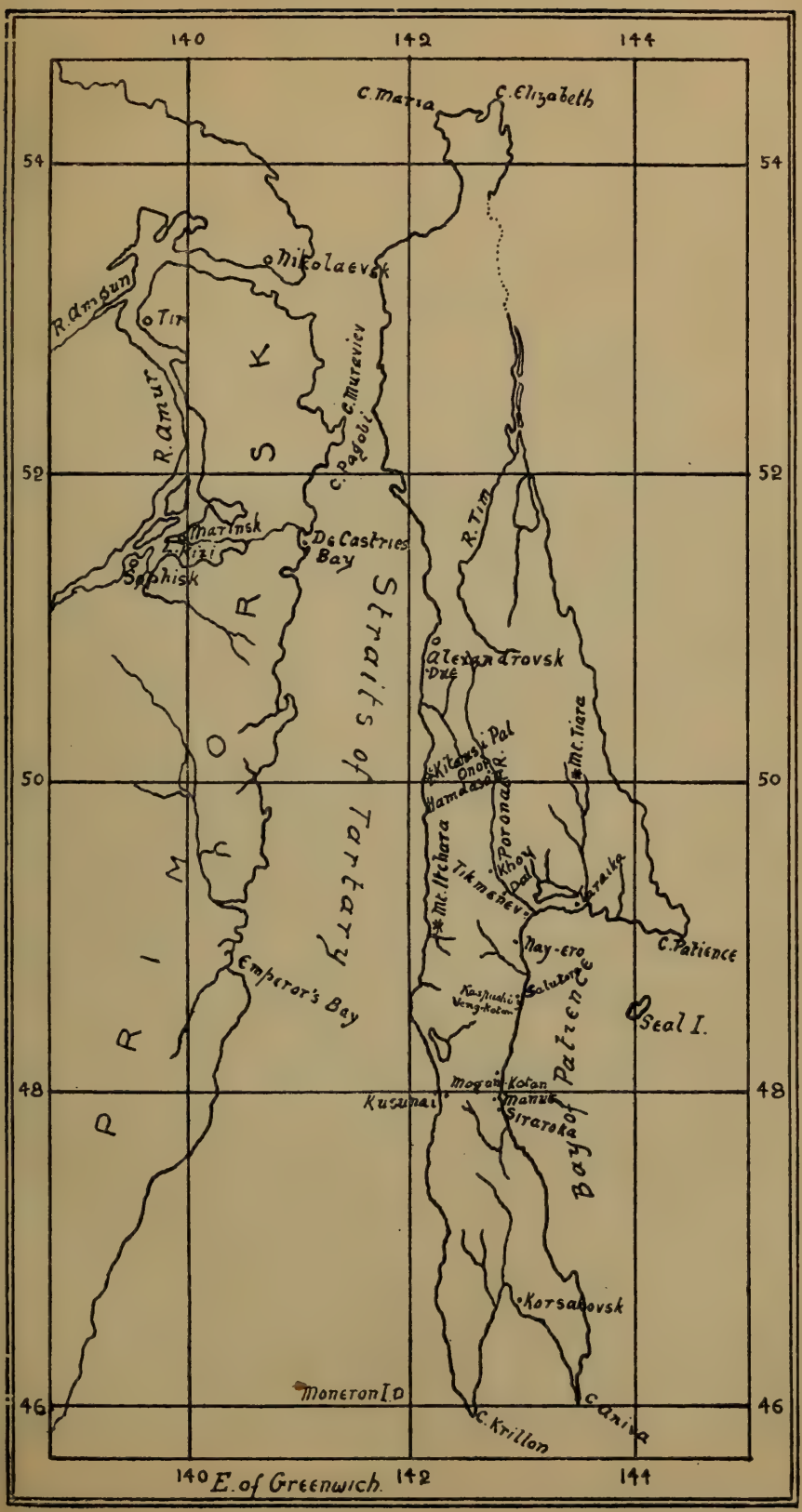
A little way beyond this eastern end of the prison I came upon an old man, moving with difficulty, and about to sink down upon the grass. I could not help being struck by the difference between his intelligent face and those of the criminals one saw everywhere in the streets, and I asked my companion who he was. "Yes, you're right," he replied, "he is an intelligent man. He was a millionaire (in rubles), but his big 'fabrik,' heavily insured, was burnt down, and he was accused of incendiarism. Sentenced to fifteen years' hard labour on Sakhalin, he had no means of leaving the island at its expiration. He is now between sixty-five and seventy, and is broken down and ailing, after his degrading sentence. He must now earn his

living or starve, but is paralyzed, and subsists on a scanty charity."

Truly the place was redolent of sad stories of lives wrecked, and this island was the last place in which to expect any ray of hope to brighten their horizon and once more give hope of regeneration.

Our preparations consisted of food, clothing, and arms. For barter with the natives we laid in twenty pounds of coarse leaf tobacco, bricks of tea (tea-dust and twigs pounded and compressed and probably mixed with ox-blood), gunpowder and shot, etc., pipes, needles, cotton, matches, coloured handkerchiefs, cloth, sweets, rice, sugar, etc., etc.

Provisions presented considerable difficulties. A Russian engineer, who had been prospecting petroleum lakes on the north-east coast, had been delayed in ascending the river on his return, and his stores having given out, he and his men had arrived in a terrible plight, having been starved for three days and terribly bitten by mosquitoes. It was therefore desirable to err on the side of excess, but the difficulties of transport prevented this, for besides the uncertainties of land carriage, native canoes could carry but light cargoes. Our tent canvas, *shubi* (great overcoats lined with sheepskin or fur), mackintoshes, bedding, etc., besides guns and ammunition, were no light weight. We could, therefore, only add to these, small quantities of tinned foods, baked pulled black bread, rice, etc., and rely upon the chances of shooting ducks or bear, and bartering with natives for reindeer's flesh to make up the deficiencies of our larder.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C. Maria
C. Elizabeth
Nikolaevsk
R. Amgun
Tir
R. Amur
C. Muraviev
C. Pagobi
Marinsk
Kizi
Sophisk
De Castries Bay
R. Tim
Straits of Tartary
Alexandrovsk
Due
Pal
Onor
Hamdasa
Mt. Tiara
Poronai R.
Khoy
Pal
Mt. Itchara
Tikmenev
Varaika
Nay-ero
C. Patience
Emperor's Bay
Kaspiuski
Veng-kotan
Salutorge
Seal I.
Bay of Patience
Mogun-Kotan
Kusunai
Manue
Siraroka
Korsakovsk
Moneron I.D
C. Aniva
C. Krillon
PRIMORSK
E. of Greenwich

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CHAPTER VI

THE ISLAND OF SAKHALIN

History of the discovery of the island—Captain Vries in search of the "Gout en Silverycke eylant"—Believed to be a peninsula—The Jesuit Fathers' quaint reports—How the island got its name—La Pérouse's discoveries—Captain Nevelsky settles the question of its insularity—Native legends of a deluge—Was it a peninsula?—A forest-clad land, the home of the great brown bear—55° below zero—Mails by dog-sledge across the frozen sea—A mystery of the ice-bound straits—Geology—Strange races—Who were the aborigines?—Dwellers in pits—The Russian occupation.

BEFORE narrating my experiences on the journey to the north-east coast, I propose to give the reader some idea of the general conditions of the island, a brief *résumé* of its history, and a slight sketch of its inhabitants and physical features. Unless ancient Chinese annals, yet untranslated, contain some reference to Sakhalin, the earliest record in existence concerning it, is the report of an expedition made by a few Japanese in the year 1613. On their return they drew a map of the southern portion, the only part they had seen, and called it Karafto,* by which we may conclude that they imagined it to be a portion of the mainland of China (Eastern Tartary), Kara being the old Japanese name for that country.

* Kara in many languages of the East, Mongol, Urdu, and Manchu, etc., means black, and it is tempting to see in this name the same signification as Sahalien, a Manchu word also meaning black, but the probabilities are in favour of the interpretation adopted in the text.

Thirty years later, a Dutch captain, Martin Vries, sent by the famous Governor-general of the East Indies, Antonio van Diemen, to discover the "Gout en Silverycke eylant," *i.e.* a legendary island rich in gold and silver, sailing north-west from the coast of Yezo anchored in Aniva Bay, the southernmost bay of the island, being the first European to land on this *terra incognita*. Rounding Cape Aniva he reached the 49th parallel, and named a prominent headland on the east coast, Cape Patience, which name it bears to-day.

Nothing had been known by the Russians, before this date, of the north-eastern extremities of Asia for Yermak, the pioneer of Russia in Siberia, had only crossed the border in 1581. Yet within less than seventy years the vast continent had been crossed, and Vasili Poyarkov, in 1645, having descended the Amur, reported confused rumours from the natives of an island lying at the mouth of the river. One other reference to it about this time was made in an old Russian record of the seventeenth century, which says that, "On a great island lying over against the mouth of the river dwell a people, the Gilyaks; who keep in their villages 500 to 1000 dogs; all possible animals they eat, and bring up bears to do peaceful work."

It is therefore strange that after a lapse of 200 years, notwithstanding all reports to the contrary, the island should still be thought a peninsula as late as the middle of the nineteenth century.

The first authentic information on the subject came from the Jesuit Fathers at the court of the great Chinese Emperor K'angshi. This indefatigable ruler, who prosecuted so seriously his study of mathematics, astronomy, etc., with the reverend fathers, proposed that they should make a map of the district in which the nearer portion of the Great Wall lay. This region he knew well from his frequent hunting expeditions, and he was so well pleased with the work of his tutors that he deputed them to

go out in couples and map out the whole of his vast empire.

It was in the year 1709 that the three PP. Regis, Jartoux and Fredelli set out to traverse Manchuria, or as it was then called, Eastern Tartary; and, though they never reached Sakhalin, they managed to get as far as the village of Tondon (to-day called Dundun), which is on the right bank, about 400 miles from the mouth of the Amur, and had something to say of the island.

I will let them tell their story in their own words.

"We felt it very sharp at the beginning of September; and the eighth of that Month, on which we were at Tondon, the first Village of the Ke tching ta se Tartars,* we were oblig'd to get us Habits lin'd with Lamb-skins, which we wore all the Winter. They also began to fear that the Saghalien oula (Amur), though so large and deep a River, would be froze over, and that the Ice would stop our Boats; accordingly it was froze every Morning to a certain distance from its Banks, and the Inhabitants assured us that in a few Days the Navigation would become dangerous by reason of the Quarries of Ice which fell down the River: The Cold is also very much prolong'd by the great Forests in this Country, which are more numerous and thicker of Wood the nearer you advance to the Eastern Ocean: We were nine Days in passing through one of them, and obliged to have several Trees cut down, by the Mantcheou Soldiers, to make room for our Observations of the Sun's Meridian." †

The good father runs on in his interesting way, telling of strange peoples with curious dress and food, but closely resembling the Gilyaks, the Golds, and the Orotchons, who still inhabit the banks of the lower Amur to-day. And, though they never reached Sakhalin, he has something to relate of it which he learnt from the Ke tcheng ta se, whose country, he says, "extends along the Saghalien oula, from

* Fish-skin Tartars, from their dressing in fish-skins.

† Du Halde's "History of China," translated by R. Brooks, 1736.

Tondon to the Ocean. . . . They were the first that inform'd us, of what we did not know before, that opposite to the Mouth of Saghalien oula was a great Island inhabited by People like themselves; the Emperor afterwards sent some Mantcheoux thither, who passed over in Barks of these Ke tcheng ta se, who live by the Sea-side, and trade with the Inhabitants of the Western Parts of the Island.

"Had these Gentlemen been as careful in measuring the South Part as they were in traversing the East, and had returned by the North to the Place from whence they set out, we should have had a compleat Knowledge of this Island; but they neither brought us the Measure of the South Coast, nor the names of the Villages there; wherefore we could only describe that Part from the Reports of some of the Inhabitants. . . . It is variously named by the Inhabitants of the Continent, according to the different Villages which they frequent; but the Name by which it is generally distinguished is Saghalien anga hata,* the Island at the mouth of the Black River. . . The Mantcheoux who were sent thither learned only the Names of the Villages through which they passed, for the want of necessaries obliged them to return much sooner than they could have wish'd, they told us that these Islanders fed no Horses, nor any other Beasts of burthen, but that in several Parts they had seen a sort of tame Stag which drew their Sledges, and which, according to their descriptions, were like those used in Norway."

So far as the description goes it tallies with the conditions to-day, saving only the occupation of portions of the west and south coast by the Russians.

It was owing incidentally to the reverend fathers, and the great geographer d'Anville, that the island received its

* This is Manchu, and the words mean—
Saghalien, or Sahalien, black.
(oula, or ula, understood, river.)
anga, mouth.
hata, rock.

present name, for it has had many, as the following list will show :—Tarakai, Repun (Ainu), Khuye (Chinese), Karafto, Kita-sima (Japanese), Tun (Manchu), and Tchoka (native, Orochon). The name by which it was known among the Manchus was Tun, or Toung, which means, "a hole dug in the ground, to which retreat certain wild men," possibly a reference to the pre-Ainu race, which is believed to have inhabited Sakhalin, or even to the present northern tribes, who used to live in mounds, and still do so in winter. This name, however, does not appear to be mentioned by the Jesuit explorers, perhaps because they regarded it as equally fabulous with the statements of the Chinese geographers, who wrote of the "northern crab barbarians" as inhabiting a region evidently intended for Sakhalin; and of their neighbours on Yezo as having "Bodies covered with Hair, Whiskers that hung down to their Breasts, and their Swords tied by the Point behind their Heads." Their information was, indeed, out of date, for we may perhaps see in these so-called fabulous tales, reference to the prehistoric pit-dwellers of Yezo (the Koropok-guru), and the warlike Ainus of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The reverend fathers appear, on the other hand, to have been impressed by the mention of *Saghalien oula anga hata*, or the rocks at the mouth of the black river; and on the copy of the map of the Chinese Empire, sent home to the King of France, only a very few of the Chinese, Manchu, and Khalka names of places, mountains, and rivers, were transliterated into Latin characters, the island remaining unnamed; but at the mouth of the Amur appeared this legend, "Saghalien oula anga hata." The copyists employed by d'Anville in 1734 found this too long, and simply wrote Saghalien,* thinking it was meant

* Sakhalin, is the official Russian name of the island, and, according to the Manchu scholar, Mr. M. F. A. Fraser, "gets very near to the Manchu pronunciation" of the characters, which he transliterates

to apply to the island, to which it has ever since stuck. It is a coincidence that such a curiously apt name—"black"—for the penal island to which Russia's worst criminals are despatched, should have thus accidentally been given to it.

The illustration in the text is a reproduction of a map, d'Anville appended to a letter he published in 1737, explaining why he had so constructed his map of this much-debated region, and particularly his reasons for making Yezo an island.

It will be noticed that Sakhalin is about half its true size, and that Capes Aniva and Patience, of which d'Anville had heard, through a report of Captain Vries' expedition just to hand, are added by him to the mainland, instead of being placed on the southern half of the island, which should extend southwards for another 4°.

In 1787, the famous explorer La Pérouse, following the coast of Tartary, with d'Anville's map before him, determined to steer eastwards to reconnoitre the Kurile islands. He was then in latitude 48°, and, to his surprise, soon encountered land, though the map marked nothing nearer than the southern end of Sakhalin at $49\frac{1}{4}°$. Neither to the south-east nor to the north-east could he find a channel, and he came to the conclusion that this was the island called Saghalien by the geographers, and that it stretched much further to the south than they had imagined.

Proceeding in a northerly direction along the coast, he landed in three bays; and has left us an interesting account of his meetings with the natives, who from his description are recognizable as Ainus.

Beyond latitude 51°, the Straits becoming shallower, he made over to the coast of Tartary, and found and named the De Castries Bay. In answer to his inquiries here, whether there was a passage between the isle and the

Sa-kha-li-yen. "The stress," he adds, "is diffused as in Japanese or French."

mainland, the natives indicated that there were sandbanks, that marine flora grew thereupon, and that they had to drag their canoes over the shoals. He therefore turned south, and navigated the strait which divides Yezo from Sakhalin, to which he gave his name.

Nine years later an English captain, W. Broughton, attempted to pass, but failed, although his brig drew only ten feet. Krusenstern met with no greater success during his three years' expedition in East Siberian waters, from 1803 to 1806; but a Japanese surveyor, Mamia Rinzo, two years later, succeeded where all others had failed.

He was despatched by the Japanese Government, whose suspicions had been aroused by the arrival of a Russian embassy at the Mikado's Court in 1805, and in 1808 an expedition was fitted out to survey the coasts of Eastern Tartary. Mamia Rinzo navigated the Straits (hitherto called the Gulf) of Tartary, and returned with carefully drawn up plans and charts. These were pigeonholed in the archives at Yeddo, and only discovered many years later by P. von Siebold.

The insularity of Sakhalin therefore still remained a secret. As late as 1846 Lieutenant Gevrilov, who was despatched on a Government expedition, and was wrecked, wrote, "Sakhalin is a peninsula." It was left to Captain Nevelsky to establish once and for all the insularity of Sakhalin.

The great Count Muraviev, whose brilliant administration I have already referred to, in conjunction with Captain Nevelsky at sea, had been searching for a suitable naval base on the Eastern Siberian coast, with a view to strengthening the Russian position and hold on the Amur. They had parted in Europe in the year 1848, both bound for the East. No news of the latter had been received for months, and fears were entertained of the loss of his vessel, when on September 3, 1849, she appeared on the horizon off Ayan (Sea of Okhotsk). It is said that

L. of C.

Muraviev, impatient to hear the news, set out to meet him in a row-boat, and was hailed through a speaking-trumpet by Nevelsky in the following words :—"God has assisted us . . . the main question is happily solved . . . Saghalien is an island, and sea-going ships can penetrate into the estuary of the Amur both from the north and the south. An ancient error is completely dissipated ; I now report to you that the truth has been discovered." *

This discovery, however, did not become public property at once, for, in 1855, during the Anglo-French war with Russia, an English commander, with a small squadron, coming upon six Russian vessels in De Castries Bay, retired to the south to block their exit and await reinforcements, thinking that an isthmus to the north had rendered the Russian position a *cul de sac.* Meanwhile, the Russian squadron slipped out of the bay, and, steering north, navigated the narrow strait between Capes Lazarev and Pogobi, and reached the mouth of the Amur.

It is interesting to note, in regard to the reported connexion of the island and mainland in historical times, that the Gilyak natives have a legend telling of the destruction of the isthmus which is said to have united them. It is one of the deluge stories that are so curiously prevalent.

The story tells how, "In the good old times no boat was needed to go to and from the Amur land (mainland at the mouth of Amur), for then dry land united it with Sakhalin, but once there came water from the sea—much, much water—then only were seen the tops of the mountains. During that flood many Gilyak hunters perished, but one found himself, by chance, on the top of a mountain, sharing it with a bear. The beast did him no harm, and even allowed him to sit upon its back while he swam to the tops of other mountains, where more refugees from the flood were congregated. When the waters receded and

* Vladimir. "Russia on the Pacific."

life went on as usual, the Gilyaks wanted to return whence they had come, to sell the furs they had saved; but on arrival at the familiar spot, lo! the isthmus was gone, swept away by the flood, and in its place was the narrow strait, which remains to this day. At the time of this catastrophe," they added, "the river Amur overflowed, and large numbers of our brethren on its banks perished."

I asked them where this mountain was, and they indicated a peak about forty miles south of Alexandrovsk, called Ktaüsi pal (pal = peak or mountain), and named by La Pérouse, "Pic la Martinière," after the botanist of his expedition.* When the natives see this peak, my Gilyak informant said, they always make an offering to the god of the mountain.

I have wondered whether the following had anything to do with the Gilyak story, or was only a coincidence. I happened to be passing down the Straits of Tartary on a small Russian cargo steamer, and talking to the captain about the weather encountered there, when he said, "There are frequent fogs here, and you know how difficult navigation is, but there is always one guide. In the thickest of fogs can always be seen the top, just the summit, of a mountain in Sakhalin." Is this the mountain, towering above the heavenly floods, the clouds and fog, on which the Gilyak and bear found themselves?

Another legend bearing on the point is told by their old men, who say that "their fathers or grandfathers

* La Pérouse says, in his account of his voyage round the world, "Le 22 (juillet, 1787) au soir, je mouillai à une lieue de terre, par trente—sept brasses (fathoms) fond de vase. J'etais par le travers d'une petite rivière; on voyait à trois lieues au Nord un *pic très—remarquable;* sa base est sur le bord de la mer, et son sommet, de quelque côté qu'on l'aperçoive, conserve la forme la plus régulière; il est couvert d'arbres et de verdure jusqu'à le cime: je lui ai donné le nom de *pic la Martinière*, parce qu'il offre un beau champ aux recherches de la botanique, dont le savant de ce nom fait son occupation principale."

remembered the time when on the island there were no Russians, and it was very hot. The Russians came, and brought with them the cold and snowstorms. Before this, grapes ripened on the island, and now only in the south, and even there they are very sour, and not really ripe. In the north there is only the plant, and it bears no fruit."

Such is not an uncommon tale of primitive folk, who, like their more civilized neighbours, look back upon "the good old times," and unconsciously gild earlier days with "memory's sunset ray." But taking these two legends together, and translating the time to which they relate to a period not later than three or four centuries ago, there seems some probability, or at least possibility, of a basis of fact. The strange intermixture, observable in the fauna and flora, arctic, temperate, and sub-tropical, and even more noticeable in the Primorsk, the coast region of the mainland opposite, suggests a chapter in the history of these regions when their climate approximated to that of Central Japan to-day.

The tiger, larger and with longer fur than his Bengal brother, is found where the elk wanders; and though I do not credit the Gilyak's reports to Dr. Schrenck, of traces of it found on Sakhalin, it is met with every winter between Khabarovsk and Nikolaevsk, and crosses the Amur on the ice, when wild boars are scarce, and the horses of the Russians or the Soluns are to be had. I have seen the little striped ground-squirrel which is so common among the mosques of India, in the bushes of the interior of Sakhalin, and not far off the reindeer nibbling the lichen growing on the *tundra*, which in winter is a solitary frozen waste.

It has been calculated that 15 per cent. of the species of birds observed on the island are from the polar regions, and 12 per cent. sub-tropical. The long-tailed rosefinch from the south (*Uragus sanguinolentus*) and the osprey (*Pandion haliætus*) of the arctic regions are both found on

Sakhalin. The flora exhibits as great a diversity. Bamboos (*Arundinaria kurilensis*) and Swiss pines (*Pinus cembra pumila*), hydrangeas, the cork- (*Phellodendron amureuse*) and spindle-trees (*Euonymus macropterus*) are here, with the *Betula ermani*, and the gnarled larch (*Larix daurica*), and birch, and the berry-laden bushes of the Siberian *tundra*.

Now, if we suppose that a neck of land once united Sakhalin with the mainland, the cold current from the Okhotsk Sea—which runs strong through the Straits of Tartary, forcing back a weaker branch of the Kuro Siwo or Gulf Stream of the East—must then have found its way blocked. The warm current flowing north from the Japan Sea would have pursued its course up the Gulf of Tartary without the active opposition of the colder one, and washing first the shores of the mainland, or Primorsk, would, on reaching the isthmus, have swept round in a southerly trend, laving the west coast of Sakhalin. This might account for the partial survival of sub-tropical vegetation.

The present configuration of the shoals and sandbanks immediately to the north of the "funnel" of the Straits of Tartary seemed to me, when travelling through them and studying the charts, also to support the theory of the existence at some time, not remote, of an isthmus joining Capes Lazarev and Pogobi. The great accumulation in the form of sandbanks, and one in particular in mid-channel, but three-quarters of a fathom deep and immediately to the north of the "narrows," could be much more easily accounted for by the previous existence of a neck of land, and the consequent check and deposition of alluvium in a quiet bend, than by the present conditions of a strong current from the north at four knots an hour.

Nor is it difficult to conceive how the catastrophe, pictured by the Gilyaks, might have taken place. Peter Dobell, writing in the year 1813, has described for us the circumstances which brought about the insulation of the

town of Okhotsk. He pictures the then site as a long narrow island sandbank, and adds, "a few years ago the river became choaked (*sic*) at the mouth by a more than ordinary quantity of ice. The strength of the stream not being sufficient to force it out by the usual channel, it sank to the bottom, and at length completely obstructed the egress of the waters. Thus repelled, they swelled to an enormous height, covering all the country round, and forced themselves at length through the sandy beach, by what is called the new channel, insulating the town on the spot I have already described."

The island of Sakhalin is 590 miles long, or the distance from Land's End to Cape Wrath, and from 17 to 100 miles broad, with an area of 29,336 miles, or a trifle less than that of Scotland; while its population on January 1, 1898, was about 36,000, or scarcely one-eighth of the population of the city of Edinburgh. It is separated from the most northerly of the large islands of Japan, Yezo, by La Pérouse Strait, which presents to the mariner a difficult and dangerous crossing, though only twenty-eight miles in width.

It is a mountainous country, a long backbone or ridge running from north to south, and keeping near to the western coast; and three spurs stretching to the east coast. The longest ends in Cape Patience, with Mount Tiara, 2000 feet in height, rising about midway; and the other two in the extreme south, one at Cape Aniva, and the latter a few miles to the north-west of Korsakovsk. The ridge maintains an average altitude of about 2500 feet, culminating in Ichara pal or Pic Lamanon, 4860 feet in height, about fifty miles to the north of the narrowest part of the island. Two main rivers, each with a course of about 300 miles, have their watershed about the centre of the island; one, the Poronai (Ainu, *poro* = great; and *nai* = river), flowing south into the Bay of Patience, and the other the Tim (in the Gilyak

tongue, *tim* means cranberry, which is abundant on the banks), which I descended, finding outlet in the Bay of Ni, on the north-east coast. Short torrential streams there are in great numbers, especially on the west and south-east coasts.

The land is for the greater part covered with primeval forest. So dense is this, that the natives depend for highway upon the rivers, which they traverse in summer in canoes dug out of tree-trunks, and in winter in dog- or reindeer-sledges over the frozen surfaces.

The commonest trees in the forests in the northern half are larch (*Larix daurica*) and birch (*Betula alba*), and in the south spruce (*Picæa ajanensis*), and fir (*Abies sachalinensis*). In addition to these are the less common aspen, willow, elm, maple, nut, Swiss pine, mountain ash, etc.

The forests naturally change their *personnel* with their situation. On the mountain-side, and down in swampy places, where cold winds prevail, the flora is limited, and the sparse vegetation, the hoary moss-hung trees, and the almost snow-white lichen-sprinkled ground, the home of the reindeer, hint of approaching arctic conditions.

In sheltered valleys, on the other hand, I have found lofty larch trees measuring, as nearly as I could tell by pacing a fallen giant, 145 feet, and in the south, as already mentioned, are found the spindle- and cork-trees, the bamboo, hydrangea, and the heracleum.

The thick undergrowth was chiefly composed of wild rose, spiræa (*betulæfolia ?*) and berried bushes, including the cloudberry (*Rubus chamæmorus*), cranberry (*Oxycoccus palustris*), crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), and the red whortleberry or cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis idæa*).

On the whole it is the *taiga*, the Siberian "jungle" or belt of trackless forests of birch, larch, and spruce that prevails on Sakhalin ; and the *tundra*, with its meres and swamps, covered with dank grass, gnarled and stunted larch and birch, low clusters of berry-laden brushwood,

shrouded in a drear sunlit mist in summer, or a frozen waste in winter, is only met with in parts, more especially in the north on the west coast.

If the human population of Sakhalin is small in number, the four-footed inhabitants are many. It was probably as a happy hunting-ground that the island appealed to the Gilyak pioneers from the Amur, whose descendants are settled to-day on the east and west coasts and the banks of the river Tim.

The most striking of all the animals on Sakhalin is, without doubt, the big brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), which is found in great numbers. Wolves also haunt the forests, but chiefly in the south, and even there not in any great numbers to-day. Foxes are, however, prolific, and the skins of these, the reindeer, the sable, and the otter, go to make up the bulk of the fur trade to the mainland.

Though situated in the temperate zone, Sakhalin, certainly in its northern half, has a climate similar to that of Lapland and southern Greenland. Alexandrovsk, the chief place on the island, lying about sixty miles north of the centre on the west coast, has exactly the same latitude, even to the second, as Brighton; yet its mean annual temperature is just below freezing-point (31·64° Fahr.).

The summer heat is considerable, and hence a great range is experienced. The figures for 1900, which were not then (1901) published, but kindly given me by the student-convict and meteorological observer, showed a maximum of 81° Fahr. in July, and −38° Fahr. in January, or a range of 119° Fahr. In the interior, at Rikovsk, this has been increased to 149° Fahr., the thermometer rising to 94° (1897) above and falling to 55° below zero Fahr. (1890).

This falls considerably short of the low temperatures experienced in the extreme north of Siberia, notably at the reputed pole of cold, Verkhoyansk, on the river Yana, where it is said that −81° Fahr. have been registered.

A more instructive comparison, however, may be made from monthly averages. In the following table are recorded the *averages of mean readings* for the coldest and warmest months of the year, and the ranges between.

Lat. N.		Jan.	July.	Range.
° ′ ″		F.	F.	F.
50 49 50	Alexandrovsk (Sakhalin, W. coast)	−3°	62°	65°
50 43 (*circa*)	Rikovsk (,, interior)	−8	63	71
46 39	Korsakovsk (,, S. coast)	13	64	51
67 20	Verkhoyansk (Siberian mainland, E. Siberia)	−56	58	114
51 1	Chita (Siberian mainland, Trans-Baikalia)	−15	66	81
48 28	Khabarovsk (Siberian mainland, Primorsk)	−7	70	77
43 6	Vladivostok (Siberian mainland, Primorsk)	5	69	64
59 57	St. Petersburg	15	66	51
51 29	London	37	64	27

It will be seen that, whereas Sakhalin experiences nearly the same temperature during July as do other places in Siberia, and even St. Petersburg and London, during January the cold is less intense than in the interior, on the mainland, but much more so than in the two European towns.

Korsakovsk in the south, though suffering as does the rest of the island from keen north winds, shows a striking contrast to other Sakhalin places in its winter records.

Winter lasts long, and the figures for 1900 recorded 208 days on which frost occurred, and on 141 of these no thaw took place. Late in September, or early in October, the snow begins to fall. At first it lies only on the tops of the mountains. Soon, however, it creeps down the sides, and the old men of Alexandrovsk told me that from October 13 (October 26, N.S,) it should come to stay. Thence onwards for nearly six months the land is covered with a white pall, on an average for 170 days, but in 1895 it remained for no less than 203 days. Its depth

varies from one to three feet (at Rikovsk 34⅓ inches were recorded in 1896), being deeper in the *tundra* valleys of the rivers and shallower on the mountains, but almost anywhere one may come unexpectedly upon drifts of seven feet, from which it is not easy to extricate one's self.

With the opening of winter comes the closing of the Straits of Tartary to navigation. From the middle of November until May no ships are seen, and communication is absolutely cut off, save for the cable, excepting during two months in midwinter. Even this slender and uncertain means of communication was denied the inhabitants, for in June, 1901, the cable was broken, thus rendering their isolation complete during the following winter.

Towards the end of December, or the beginning of January, the sea is sufficiently frozen for natives to undertake the arduous task of sledging to Nikolaevsk with the mails. At Alexandrovsk, and generally to the south of the "funnel" of the Straits, only the coastal fringe of the sea is frozen, but to the north of that all is covered save for occasional holes. It is no easy journey along the ice-bound fringe of the coast, northwards to Cape Pogobi, and thence across the snow-covered frozen sea to the mainland.

To the *narta*, as the sledge is called, are harnessed thirteen dogs of the Arctic type. No. 1 is the leader, a valuable animal, the cleverest and most experienced. He has shoulder-straps, and one also passing between his legs is attached to the sledge. To this strap the others are joined by thongs on either side, and should any shirk their work, they are pounced upon by the leader or their fellows, and severely bitten. No reins, nothing but the strap connects the team with the sledge and its driver. The *narta* is a lightly constructed framework of wood, about fourteen inches high and fourteen feet long. Higgledy-piggledy lie the dogs outside the post-office at Alexandrovsk, their master in furs, mocassins and long skin hood, from out which peeps his pigtail. But already the

ARRIVAL OF THE DOG-SLEDGE MAIL FROM THE MAINLAND.

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mails are out and on the *narta,* and the Gilyak, seizing the dogs, casts them to right and left. Throwing himself quickly astride of the sledge, feet on rails, clasping his two short iron-shod sticks, and calling, *Ti ti, i.e.* "Forward," to the dogs, the mail is away. A dash down the hill, and less than a mile's run brings them to the sea ; but which is sea and which is land? All is covered with snow. For 100 miles they pursue their course over the frozen fringe of the sea.

Should they meet a traveller, the driver digs his sticks (*caur*) into the snow, and calls, "*Pore!*" (Stop !) or "*Kau! Kau!*" (Right ! Right !) The dogs swerve, the left leg of the Gilyak is seen oddly in the air, but the sticks maintain his balance, and the equipage is quickly turned aside. Should the owner, however, fail to see the traveller, the dogs may fly at the stranger and do him grievous injury, for in order to keep them running they are only half fed until the end of the journey.

From Cape Pogobi the crossing of the Straits is made in a north-westerly direction, threading the Khazeliv Islands to a Gilyak village Mi on the opposite shore, nearly fifty miles distant. This part of the journey must be compassed in daylight, and an early start (5 a.m.) is made. At first the dogs speed along over the smooth snow-covered surface at about seven miles an hour, with halts of five or ten minutes at every ten versts ($6\frac{2}{3}$ miles) to give them breath. As the middle is neared rougher going is met with, for hummocky ice has been piled up by the wind in open water, and detours have to be made to avoid dangerous holes. So strong is the wind that the narrow strait between Capes Lazarev and Pogobi, though barely five miles across, is always kept open, the ice being swept onwards as quickly as it forms, to cling to the fringe further south, therefore it is that the crossing lengthens out to nearly fifty miles.

Halfway across a halt is called, and the dogs are given half a dried fish each. Time presses, however, the days

are short, and soon they are off again, the driver calling to his team, "*Tach! tach!*" (On! on!) to hasten their steps. At last the islands are reached and threaded, but the sun has already set, and darkness has descended ere the glad sounds of barking announce the arrival at the Gilyak village of Mi.

The next day the coast must be skirted again, and the Amur ascended, unless the driver is venturesome and takes a short cut, clambering over the Pronge headland, before Nikolaevsk can be reached.

It is by no means an easy journey, and not to be attempted without an experienced *kaya* (driver), for open water or a thinly frozen surface may swallow the unwary.

Two men this winter (1902–3) made an attempt to cross on a horse-sledge. They were, I believe, ex-convict merchants, but nothing has been heard of them since, up to the time of writing. The two horses were found in the Straits, one frozen to death, and the other nearly so; but no trace of their masters at all. It seemed most likely that they had been drowned, but how they had met this fate, and the horses escaped, was a mystery. Possibly, overtaken by darkness, they ventured on foot to find a way, and were engulfed in a hole or in the open sea to the south.

Such are the dangers and difficulties of the journey of the mails, and of any venturous passenger during midwinter from Sakhalin to the mainland.

We can picture the excitement of the first arrival, after the many weeks' absence of news, as the team of dogs dashes up the hill to the post-office. Outside stands a sign-post, as if to remind the inhabitants of their exile and hopeless separation from civilization, with the inscription, "St. Petersburg, 10,186 versts" (6752 miles).

Another interval of six weeks' or two months' isolation follows midwinter communication, during which no ship

10,186 VERSTS TO ST. PETERSBURG. DEPARTURE OF THE DOG-SLEDGE MAIL FOR THE MAINLAND.

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can plough the ice-laden strait nor sledge venture across the treacherous ice.

Although it is common knowledge that the farther east of Paris one goes, the more extreme is the climate, a fact which Napoleon did not seem to have realized in 1812, yet we should scarcely expect such extremes of climate as a range of 149° Fahr. on an island in the same latitude. There appear to be two main causes. The first is the prevalence of northerly and north-westerly winds in winter, and of southerly and south-easterly in summer; the second is the presence of a cold current from the Okhotsk Sea flowing down both sides of the island. The ice, led by the current and driven by the wind from this great reservoir of frost, fills up all the northern portion of the Straits of Tartary, and makes of it a continuation of the sub-arctic region of frost.

The winter's cold is, however, fine and dry, and though it has been said that Sakhalin does not know the calm days that prevail throughout the winter in Eastern Siberia, yet during the latter half of January and the month of February, beautiful bright windless days succeed one another on the island, and the dog-sledges and reindeer are brought out, and the natives make their journeys for the barter of skins.

The climate has been much maligned, and the notion of a land of fog and snow still holds the popular imagination. For such ideas we are largely indebted to navigators. The truth is that there is a great deal of fog at sea, but the mariners were not aware that it generally remains—like themselves, at sea—leaving a margin of about four miles from the land clear. The thawing of the river Amur, the floating down the Straits of great ice-blocks, and the mingling of cold and warm currents, or a keen northerly blast on the summer sea, are the causes which contribute to this state of things.

Mr. H. de Windt, after a flying visit to the island, has

written, "There are fogs throughout the year, except in the interior." Dr. James Y. Simpson, in his admirable book on Siberia, gives us a chapter on Sakhalin, compiled from statistics, and in it he remarks, "In the Alexandrovsky district there were only five days free from rain, cloud, or fog in 1895, and in no year has there ever been more than nine or ten. The island is therefore almost unsuitable for ordinary settlers, and forms only a penal colony." I have before me the meteorological reports for several years, and reference to them shows the number of clear days (and the sky has to undergo a very strict examination before the meteorological authorities will pass it as clear) in the year 1895 was no less than forty. There is less annual cloudiness, in other words, more sunshine recorded on the island than in England, and the rainfall also averages less, being but 22⅓ inches.

My own experience, as well as the meteorological records, runs counter to the above-mentioned authors' remarks.

At the time when the break-up of the weather is expected, *i.e.* in September and early October, I enjoyed brilliantly sunny days on Sakhalin, such as one seldom gets in England. During the whole of the fifty days I spent on the island I never saw a fog, but on several occasions the coast-line of the mainland, sixty miles distant, was visible.

The southern portion of the island, having a more temperate, or rather, less extreme climate, experiences, in parts, more fog and humidity than the northern half.

If I had almost omitted in this brief *résumé* of the history and physical conditions of Sakhalin to say anything of its geological formation, it would have been because so little is known. The island is attributed to the Tertiary period, although the Secondary is represented in the south by green sandstone, containing cretaceous sea-urchins; and I have observed on the coast, at Alexandrovsk,

just to the north of Jonquière Point, huge ammonites in the ferruginous marl.

Attempts have been made to find traces of geologically recent volcanic action, but so far they have not met with success. Posting one day along the sands south of the headland just mentioned, I descended to examine something that caught my attention, and found what I thought to be a piece of lava. On inquiry, however, I learned that an adjoining coal-mine had been set on fire, accidentally or wilfully, by convicts, and had been smouldering for thirty years; hence my discovery! It seems much more probable that, while the line of volcanic action runs down from Kamchatka through the Kurile Islands and Japan, Sakhalin represents the remaining outcrop of the line of weakness. In general exposures—the cliffs to the north of Alexandrovsk and the banks of the river Tim—showed conglomerate resting on a hard argillaceous sandstone, and occasionally calcareous schist. Marine fossils have been found at eight feet elevation above low-water mark, and the natural conclusion is that the island is undergoing a period of emergence. The presence of nearly completed lagoons on the north-east and south-west coasts are also evidence of this emergence.

The story of the earliest occupation of Sakhalin carries us back to prehistoric times. To-day, in addition to the latest comers—the Russians—five different peoples are found on the island. They are the Ainus, Gilyaks, Orochons, Tungus and Yakuts. Of the last, a Turki tribe whose habitat is Eastern Siberia with the town of Yakutsk as a centre, there are only ten men and three women on Sakhalin.

Which of these five peoples, it will be asked, were the aborigines? The Tungus, whose home is also in Eastern Siberia, and who roam from the borders of Korea to the Arctic Ocean, and from the Yenisei river to the Okhotsk Sea, are certainly not, for they have

arrived since the Russians. The Gilyak hunters probably came over from the mainland before the Orochon, and whether we are right in conjecturing their first *settlement* to have been made not earlier than two and a half centuries ago, it is certain that their traditions testify to their meeting the Ainus already in occupation of the island.

Whence did the Ainus come, and are we to regard them as the aborigines of Sakhalin? This race, finding itself among Mongol peoples, one of whose striking characteristics is their comparatively hairless faces, has struck the imagination of strangers by its possession of abundant hair and full beards. Their patriarchal look and absence of any marked Mongoloid features have further puzzled the ethnologist in attempting to classify them. Some of their customs are similar to those of northern tribes, and have induced a belief in their northern origin; but there are others, *e.g.* the habit of tattooing, which savour of the south, and we know by history and the old Ainu place-names in the south of Japan that they have been driven north thence to the island of Yezo. Probably the origin of the Sakhalin Ainus must be sought either in the flight of refugees from Yezo on the imposition of the Japanese yoke, or the early and original migrations of the race from the mainland (now the Primorsk).

They themselves, like their brethren in Yezo, have a legend that a pit-dwelling race were in possession before them; and they point to the scooped-out holes and kitchen-middens which are near their own villages of Siraroka and Tikmenev, on the east coast of Sakhalin. In these have been found obsidian and diorite implements, and clay potsherds. The Ainus have not been known to make stone implements, and diorite and obsidian do not as far as we know exist on the island. Moreover, the Ainus disclaim the knowledge and art of making clay vessels, and call the dwellers in these holes the *Tontchi* or *Toichi.*

A SAKHALIN AINU FAMILY AT HOME.

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In Ainu *toi* means clay, and *chi* baked or dried, *i.e.* "Makers of baked clay vessels."

In recent years we have been continually meeting with further evidence of the existence of prehistoric dwarf race in our own land and elsewhere. Kamchatkan legends seem to indicate the comparatively recent (400 years) existence of a dwarf people in that peninsula, and if that be so, then further links are added to the chain of pigmies stretching from Africa to Behring Straits, through the Andaman Islands, the Malay Peninsula, Formosa, Yezo, Sakhalin and Kamchatka.

Of the origins of the other three tribes it is almost as difficult to conjecture as of the Ainus. The Tungus, so-called, we may class as the most backward—the wildest offshoots of the race, of which the Manchu is the most civilized representative to-day, the people that has given China her reigning dynasty for the last two and a half centuries. A thousand years ago, according to Chinese records, these tribes were beyond the limits of even the peoples who brought yearly tribute of skins and arrows to the Court of China; and even in 1586 the annalist described them as "wild men of the northern mountains who ride about on deer." To go back further is to lose ourselves in conjecture.

Philologists, who handle milleniums as ordinary historians do centuries, tell us that from the seat of the Asiatic peoples in the Altai region, on the borders of Siberia and Western Mongolia, occurred several *wanderungen* somewhere between 5000 and 7000 years ago, and the offshoots which were to become the Chinese and the Japanese peoples were followed by the Mongols, Turks, and Manchus or Tungus.

A study of the Orochons suggest that they are a tribe which has mostly Tungus blood in its veins, mingled by intermarriage with various neighbours, such as the Gilyaks, Golds, etc.

The Gilyaks are even more difficult to classify racially. Separated in speech, manners and customs from their neighbours, they yet have some affinities in feature. This only adds to the puzzle; for while many have scarcely any hair on their faces, others, whose ancestors, perhaps, have intermarried with Ainus, have bushy beards and copious heads of hair. The most plausible suggestion is that they are of a semi-Tungus, semi-Mongol race. Philologists of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, and of the Imperial Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, hold that their language knits them in origin to the dwellers on the Pacific coast of Northern Asia, and America, and the Aleutian isles.

The total number of natives on the island is between 4000 and 5000, of whom about 1300 are Ainus, more than 2000 Gilyaks, at least 750 Orotchons, and perhaps 200 Tungus.

The island is therefore very sparsely populated; and how sparsely may be judged from the fact that during more than three days' journeying on the river Tim, the native highway to the east coast, I saw not a solitary person or dwelling.

The Russian occupation is practically confined to the district enclosed in a radius of thirty miles from Alexandrovsk on the west coast, and another smaller one around Korsakovsk in the south.

The island is divided into three administrative districts —the Alexandrovsk, Timovsk, and Korsakovsk *okrugi*. Each of these is presided over by a chief of the district, or *okruzhni nachalnik*, over whom is the military Governor of the island. The latter has great authority, but in his turn is subject to the Governor-general of the Pri-Amursky *oblast*.

The biggest prison centre is at Alexandrovsk. The next is at Korsakovsk, and the Timovsk district has two, one at Derbensk and the other at Rikovsk, thirty-five and forty-four miles, respectively, by road inland from Alexandrovsk.

Immediately around these centres clearings have been made, and beyond are a few villages dotted about in the forest, with a population varying from 200 to none at all! I came across one, poverty-stricken, with huts roofed with bark and a liberal allowance of holes (!), which contained six men only. In the late Governor's report he mentions the arrival of soldiers, who were tracking escaped convicts, at one that had the large total of two, and yet another that had none at all!

The Russian connection with the island dates from 1852, when Lieutenant Boshniak was sent to explore Sakhalin, the possession of which had become necessary in order to guard the entrance to the Amur, at which a year before the Russian flag had been planted. During the following year Ilinsky Post (Kusunai), on the west coast, and Muravievsk Post, in the Bay of Aniva, were formed. In 1858, forty convicts were at work in the coal-mines at Dui, on the west coast, and in 1869, 800 were forwarded from Trans-Baikalia.

The Japanese, who had been alarmed at the landing of the Russians in Aniva Bay at the beginning of the century, were now considerably disturbed by the activity of the Russians.

For decades back, Japanese fishers and traders in skins, etc., had haunted the coasts of Sakhalin. Now Russia wanted to claim the whole island. For the time an amicable arrangement was come to, with a joint ownership and freedom to occupy unoccupied territory. This, of course, could not last, and finally, in 1875, negotiations were completed by which Japan gave up her claim to the southern half of the island. In lieu thereof she received the cession of the Kurile islands, and an annual payment for a fixed number of years. A Japanese consul has his residence at Korsakovsk to receive this, and to pay a *pro rata* tax levied on the Japanese fishermen who still ply their trade in Sakhalin waters.

CHAPTER VII

ALEXANDROVSK TO SLAVO

Into the interior by *kibitka*—A "Free-command"—Miserable crops—A tragedy by the wayside—The famous Robin Hood of Sakhalin and his escapades—On the track of *brodyagi*.

TO resume my narrative where I left off at the end of Chapter III.; the morning of September 11 my interpreter and I were ready prepared with arms, provisions, outfit, and articles of barter for the expedition to the north-east coast of the island.

To compass my object of visiting the native tribes on the banks of the Tim and along the coast, it was necessary to make for the nearest spot on the river where it was navigable for native canoes, and then to descend it for about 200 miles. So dense was the primeval forest, that the river alone afforded a route to us and to the natives to the east coast.

A preliminary journey of thirty-five miles by a convict-made road to the prison centre of Derbensk lay before us, followed by fifteen miles of forest, threaded by a track, which must be traversed somehow, we knew not how. At the end of this was the village of Slavo, on the Tim, where we hoped to find natives to take us in a canoe down to the sea and along the coast. This much we had been able to glean beforehand of our route, and the rest had to be gathered as we went along.

A *troika* (team of three horses) was ordered for 6 a.m.,

and with Russian punctuality, a drozhky, or, more strictly speaking, a *kibitka*, of primitive description, with three rough steeds, dashed up two hours later.

It was a most unaccommodating vehicle in which to stow ourselves and baggage. In front sat the *izvostchik*, and parallel to his seat was ours, giving just room for two. A bare board with three or four inches of back, scarcely sufficient to prevent us being jerked off or slipping off backwards, is not the most comfortable seat for a day and a half's journey, and we retained reminiscences, for longer than we cared, of our intimate acquaintance with a Sakhalin *kibitka*.

In addition to our two selves, six puds * of baggage, chiefly in sacks, had to be stowed away somehow. Most of it was roped on behind, while the rest was packed with difficulty between our feet. That which was behind demanded a constant look-out, lest by much jolting it should drop by the way or fall a prey to the unnoticed *brodyaga* experienced in the stealthy abstraction of passengers' luggage.

The centre horse of a *troika* is strapped in an arched yoke (*duga*), which holds his head erect in a somewhat vice-like grip, while the outside horses are held by an off-rein apiece only. When you chance to be flying along the even sands of the seashore, the centre horse stepping high and the outside horses galloping, and the three bells on the *duga* merrily ringing, the sensation is indeed delightful.

It was nearly 9 o'clock before all was securely packed on to the *kibitka;* and we were off and away past the prison, the church, and the post-office and down the hill towards the Little Alexandrovka river. Here at Mr. Y.'s house and stores we stopped to leave parting instructions. With his usual politeness he offered to telegraph forward to the *Nachalnik Derbenskoy turmi* (the chief of the

* A pud = 40 lbs. Russian, or 36·11 lbs. English.

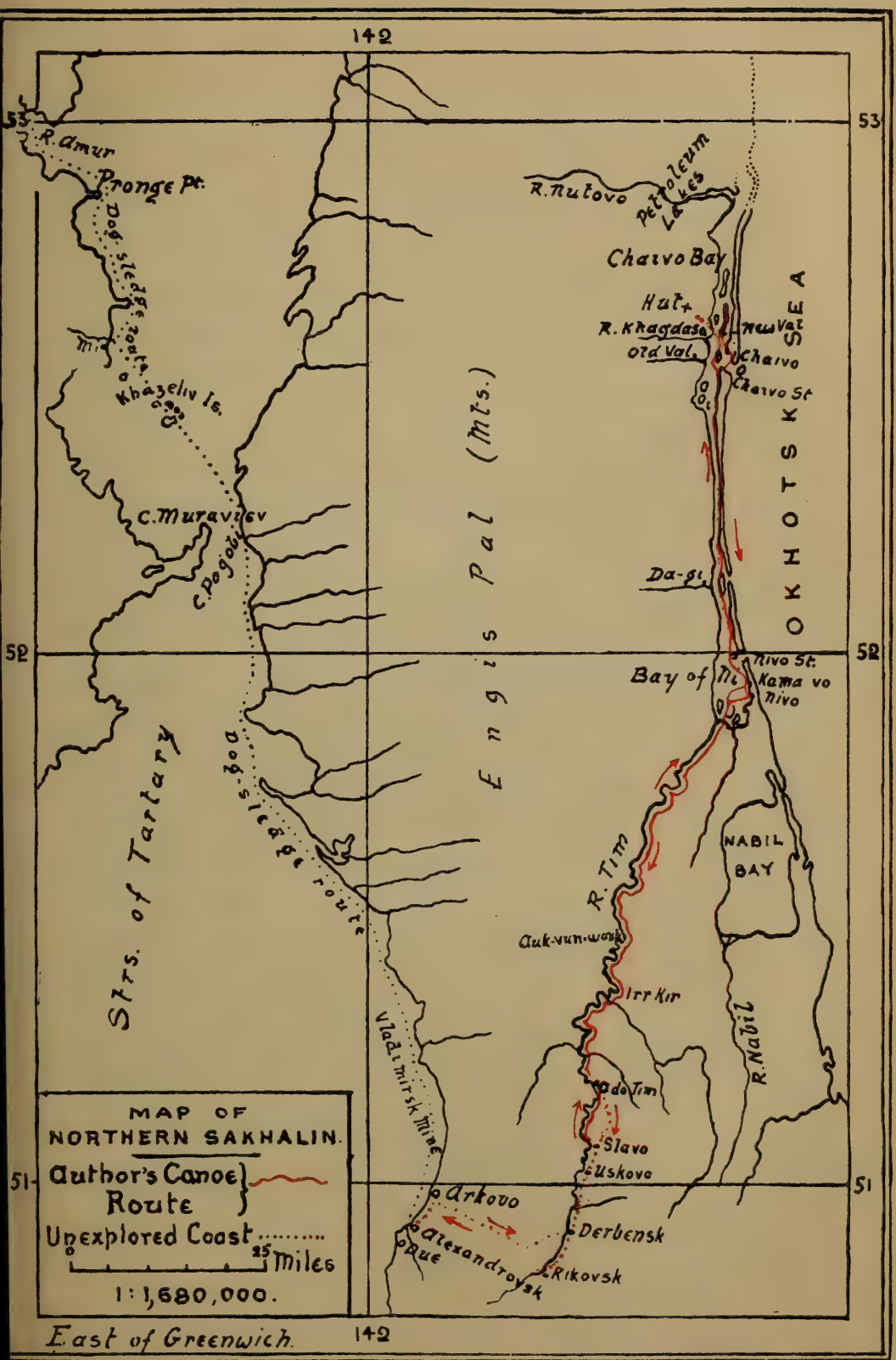
prison at Derbensk), to smooth the way for us, an action which was duly appreciated the next day.

On leaving the house we followed the river, passing on our right the hill to the north, with its dreary cemetery and terrible records of crime, our route lying along the seashore to Arkovo, the place of our previous visit on horseback. Guiding our vehicle over the drier parts, avoiding the snake-like channels in which the river lost itself before reaching the sea, about half a mile farther, we came to an old pirate vessel (Korean, I believe) lying high and dry. A head suddenly appeared over the taffrail, and the owner of it, quickly taking stock of us, of our guns, revolvers, and daggers, wished us, "*Zdravstvuete!*" (Good morning!)

Two days later he was arrested with another already referred to who was in hiding, for having murdered a youth who had gone out shooting, and with whom we had just parted.

Outlawed and ekeing out a miserable existence on provisions saved from his prison rations, with the surreptitious aid of *confrères* who were now settled; or by threatening lonely passers-by along the shore at nights, the murderer had come at length to the end of his tether. This was an opportunity of procuring a gun, which meant also a supply of food in the *taiga*.

What hope of escape is there for such? Very little. Many trust that they will get as far north as Pogobi, where the straits narrow, and, evading the cordons of soldiers, the many dangers of detection, the meeting with trackers, there be able to procure a boat from the Gilyaks in which to cross over to the mainland. Few succeed in these later times, and, if they do, their case is only one stage less bad in the lonely *taiga* of the mainland or in the vicinity of the prison officials of the Amur. But often before Pogobi is reached the guns, axes, or clothes with which they had hoped to purchase a boat from the natives,


142
53
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R. Amur
Pronge Pt.
Dog sledge route
Khazeliv Is.
C. Muravyev
C. Pogobi
Strs. of Tartary
Dog sledge route
Engis Pal (Mts.)
R. Nutovo
Petroleum Lakes
Chaivo Bay
Hut
R. Khagdasa
New Vat
Old Vat
Chaivo
Chaivo St
OKHOTSK SEA
Da-gi
Bay of Ni
Nivo St.
Kama vo Nivo
R. Tim
NABIL BAY
Auk-vun-waki
Irr Kir
R. Nabil
Vladimirsk Mine
de Tim
Slavo
Uskovo
Arkovo
Derbensk
Alexandrovsk
Rikovsk
Due
MAP OF NORTHERN SAKHALIN.
Author's Canoe Route
Unexplored Coast.....
25 Miles
1:1,680,000.
East of Greenwich.

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have gone in barter for food, and winter is upon them. There is then only one course open, for winter is more relentless than the trackers whom they have successfully evaded hitherto, and starvation and death from cold stare them in the face; they must give themselves up, undergo the flogging, and be re-installed in prison with an additional sentence.

Further along the shore we met a miserable wretch, a "free command," dragging a tree trunk through the sea. Up to his waist in the cold water, it was his task to haul this for ten miles from Arkovo to Alexandrovsk. When the steam-tug is not at liberty, five or six convicts are thus engaged in cold or warm weather for hours. It is no wonder, as my companion said, that many die ultimately from exposure. These "free-commands" are convicts who have gone through the first two stages of prison life in the "probationary," or "testing" and "reformatory" gaols, and are now allowed to live out in barracks. If married, and his wife has followed him, the "free command" may live with her outside of the prison in a hut, on condition that he does his hard labour duty. If the latter is log-dragging, then he is responsible for taking 120 into Alexandrovsk during the year. Whether this one was undergoing further punishment, that he should be subjected to this hard, and, in cold weather, dangerous toil, I do not know, but for this my companion said the ill-famed Chief of the Alexandrovsk Prison was responsible.

Turning inland at the Gilyak village, we passed through the Russian Arkovo, the first, for there are three hamlets of that name, where we had experienced the hospitality of the convict-farmer three days since. Our journey now took us beyond, by a road winding through a beautiful valley. If the little gardens, with their cabbages and potatoes, had astonished me before with their look of contentment, so did now the reverse side of the picture,

the miserably poor cereal crops standing in the little strips of clearings which fringed the road—crops that could not have yielded more than a two or threefold return on the sowings. Referring to the official records for the year 1898, I find that wheat and oats, which were the chief cereals sown in this village, yielded 3·7 and 4·4-fold harvests, against a 15-fold average in England. Potatoes showed better results with 6·7-fold crop. In the village of Slavo, which we reached the following day, the record was terrible, the wheat yield for the same year being eleven grains for every ten sown! And, as if to make more obvious the settlers' inability or culpable failure to grow enough corn to satisfy their needs, we overtook several *telyegi* (primitive springless carts), drawn by oxen and Siberian ponies, laden with sacks of American flour from Portland, Oregon. A political exile, writing in the official *Sakhalin Kalendar* of 1896, lays most of the blame for the unsatisfactory state of the outlying settlements at the officials' doors. He claims that the system, under which the "exile-settlers" * are sent to found new villages in the forests, is not given a fair trial, and adds that it is the worst men who are shipped off to these parts, because they are as sores in the eyes of the officials. Furthermore, the "exile-settlers" are often despatched to places that no sane man would have chosen, thus making, what was at best a hard life, an impossible one. Colonel Garnak, in the eighties, sent out to scientifically explore the island, is said to have come to the conclusion that colonization was in a very bad state owing to the "faulty administration."

On the other hand, the ex-convicts do not make the best of their circumstances. Small love have they for the island which is their prison-land, and, even if reconciled to it, the industry and perseverance needed in a struggle with

* One whose sentence has expired, but who must remain on the island for six more years without legal rights.

nature are not forthcoming from those who have sought in their days of freedom to live by avoiding honest work.

Some weeks later I met a Caucasian Kazak, who was a striking exception to the ordinary run of Sakhalin criminals. Whatever his crime may have been, probably insurrection, he was very energetic, and most successful. Living at the village of Uskovo, in the interior, in the midst of forest which involved no little labour in clearing, and harboured many a destructive enemy of his cattle, he owned, he told us, no less than fifty cows, and sowed his 150 puds of corn. He claimed to get a twelve-fold crop, which, even if we make some allowance for exaggeration, was really no less extraordinary for Sakhalin than his unwonted energy. In speaking of agriculture on the island, he attributed the small crops usually obtained to the laziness of the "peasants" * and their carelessness in sowing the seed, "scattering here," as he said, "in excess, and there insufficiently." "Yes," he added, "I know of one who has sown wheat on the same patch of ground for seven years consecutively, and reaped a good harvest each year; but the "peasants" don't love the land, they take from it, but gave her back nothing." A picture true enough of the majority, for whom life means the obtaining of just a bare existence.

Conditions of soil, and natural drainage of course vary very widely, and the Caucasian was fortunate in the occupation of a hilly and comparatively dry region, such as he was used to in his home-land; but very different is it in the swamps, where bitter winds prevail, and the sowing is delayed, and the early frosts nip the ear while its contents are yet soft. Continuing our journey, and leaving behind the carts laden with flour and barrels of salted fish bound for the prisons, we saw an empty *telyega* approaching

* A peasant is an ex-convict who has completed his six years of "exile-settlership," and now has the return of certain elementary civil rights, including those of the right to move from place to place.

from the opposite direction, on the side of which sat a man to whom my companion called my attention. It appeared that he was a Swede, and I inquired how it was that he came to be a convict on Sakhalin. My interpreter replied, "He was a lieutenant in the Finland Army, and his colonel, having made some insulting remark about his subaltern's *fiancée*, the lieutenant boxed his senior officer's ears on parade; and was therefore sentenced to fifteen years' hard labour on Sakhalin." This means that he must spend six years in addition as "exile-settler" on Sakhalin, and six more as "peasant" (with freedom to move in Siberia), before he will be allowed to return to Europe. He may get away earlier to Siberia, if he can obtain sufficient money to travel and buy himself into a commune, or should an employer on the mainland send for him—always supposing that he can get the permission of the Chief of his district on the island. As a matter of fact, ninety-nine out of every hundred fail to get away.

But the way, if one could forget the terrible social atmosphere, was wildly beautiful. The winding road reminded me of the last rickshaw ride in Japan down to pleasant little Mogi. Here, however, were no luscious green patches of growing paddy, picked out by dark clumps of cypresses, or hidden momentarily from our view by an avenue of graceful bamboos. Nevertheless, the shades of green were almost as varied among the birches and pines, the aspen and spruce, the mountain-ash, the willows and the elms, which clothed the fine hill slopes. On the hedges the wild rose had done its work of garlanding, and had now given way to the wild raspberry, and the lavish prodigality of the red elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*), which literally decked the route with scarlet. Butterflies flitted in the sunshine, fritillaries, peacocks and Camberwell beauties, and nothing told of coming autumn save a few falling leaves.

At the first post-station, the village of Arkovo the third, we found the horses had been taken, but my companion's

manner and a *pourboire* soon produced some—lent by the villagers. Unroping, unlading and relading one's baggage at each stage was a troublesome business, but it had to be done, and careful watch had to be kept lest the *izvostchik*, or a companion in league, might mistake some of it for his own. While the horses were being found, we discussed a midday meal, congratulating ourselves that we had not to spend the night here, for a room absolutely bare, save a table and bench, did not offer attractive accommodation. *Khlyeb i chai*—black bread and tea (in a tumbler)—were forthcoming, but anything further, including sugar, had to be supplied by ourselves.

On starting again, the road crossed the stream which had cut its way up the valley. As we neared the wooden bridge, Mr. X. pointed it out as the scene of many tragedies. One of these had happened while he was doctor at Arkovo the first. Hither had come one day an "exile-settler" on his way to Alexandrovsk, for his time had expired and he had saved sufficient to enable him to realize his great longing to quit the prison island for ever. As he was resting on the bridge, there came along the road another villager, a "free command," who sat down beside him, and began chatting. Suddenly, without warning, the latter struck the exile a heavy blow on his head, stunning him, and then, finishing his terrible work, dropped the body into the stream. Having possessed himself of his victim's "book," or certificate, showing that his time of exileship had expired and entitling him to leave the island if he had sufficient means, he made his way to a village, where he thought he would be unknown, and asked for work. However, Fate pursued him, for it happened that the original owner of the certificate was known there, suspicion was aroused, and the murderer was clapped into prison pending the inquiries which duly brought his crime to light.

Our *izvostchik* was also a convict, a "free command," and

we judged it wise to keep an eye upon him, lest he should be in concert with erstwhile companions in prison now at large in the forest; yet I was glad that the Russian system on the island admitted of a man who was still undergoing his sentence of hard labour, being allowed to do productive work outside of the prison walls. Surely this is a chance, other things being favourable, for the man to rise to better things—only one has reluctantly to come to the conclusion, I fear, that other things are not favourable.

Our road continued to rise until it reached a level of about 700 feet. The backbone of the island is crossed by practically only three passes, of which this is the chief. Another, used by the natives, leads from the river Tim to the west coast, north of Arkovo, and the third lies 200 miles to the south, between Kusunai and Manue. Rumour told of one in the extreme north, used by the native Gilyaks; but I believe no white man has ever trodden it. Arriving at the top of the pass, our route led us across an undulating plateau for several miles, until finally it descended to the bed of the upper reaches of the river Tim.

The next post-house at which we changed horses was Verkhniy Armudan. It was a poor-looking settlement, and when we called for the usual glass of tea, and for a spoon to stir our own sugar in it, a child had to be sent to borrow one in the village. Possibly sugar was a luxury here, or more probably they were accustomed to economize it in Siberian fashion, by holding the lump between the teeth, as the golden liquid was swallowed.

Resuming again we made rapid progress, for our *izvostchik* of the previous stage had no doubt informed our present one that we "tipped" well, and we—well we had calculated on that.

Speeding down from the plateau to the valley of the Tim, it was already dusk ere we reached the clearing in which the prison settlement of Derbensk stood; and, thundering across the timber bridge, drew up on the grassy fringe of

the road before a new log-built store. The question of night shelter was quickly settled, for we had been recommended by my landlady in Alexandrovsk to ask for her sister, whose husband, until lately an overseer and tracker of convicts, had recently set up a little store. We were welcomed ; and there was no difficulty made about putting us up, for was there not the full extent of the floor of the living room. What wall-paper could equal the fresh-smelling pine-logs, with alternating pattern of moss-filled crevices, and what bed the fresh, clean, plank-boarded floor? A skin and a rug, and revolvers by our heads, and we were soon oblivious of its uncompromising levelness.

But much had to be done before retiring. The problem of transport to the village of Slavo on the morrow was yet unsolved. So without further delay we started off to interview the Chief of the prison, who, though apparently rather bored, issued orders that we were to be allowed to post to Slavo. To the north of Derbensk such methods of progress were not usual, for the road only extended a few miles, and then became a track ; however, the influence of the chief of the prison was sufficient for the occasion. But Mr. X. thought it desirable to go off and see the orders carried out, and found the telegraph chief lying flat on his back, drunk, in the garden in front of his office, regardless of the fact that he presented excellent booty for thieves. Apparently this was a favourite posture in Derbensk ; for it was reported here that the major-general, sent over that summer to organize the military forces and to hold a field-day, had been found in a similar position, but in his case he had scorned the privacy of his own retreat, and occupied a public position, as befitted his rank, in the middle of the road!

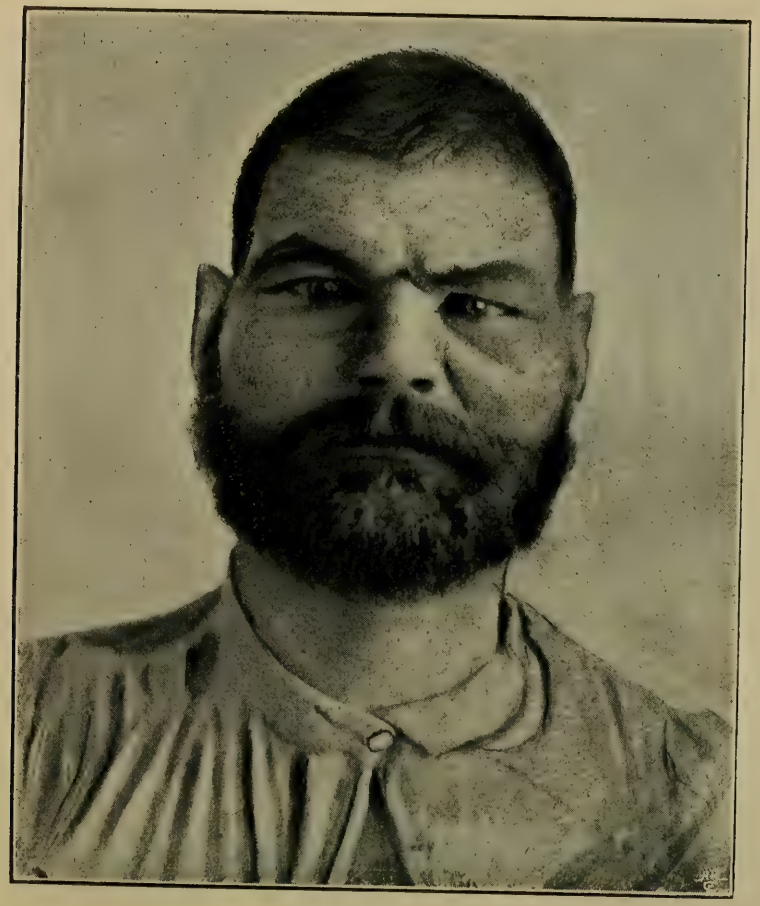
Our host and hostess proved a very worthy couple. Their new venture was by no means an easy or encouraging one. There was already the Crown store (an institution peculiar to Sakhalin) to compete with, and the "gentle

art" of shopkeeping was not without its dangers. The door of the shop had always to be kept locked, and a watch maintained from the windows for the approach of customers. Truly a terrible life of suspicion and of acting continually on the defensive, terrible for parents and children alike. I played with the little son of the household, and we pitted our Russian each against the other's. He was the apple of his mother's eye, and many an anxious hour she passed lest, as she said, he should stray out of the house into the road, "and then, you know, he might be done away with in a moment for the sake of his clothes."

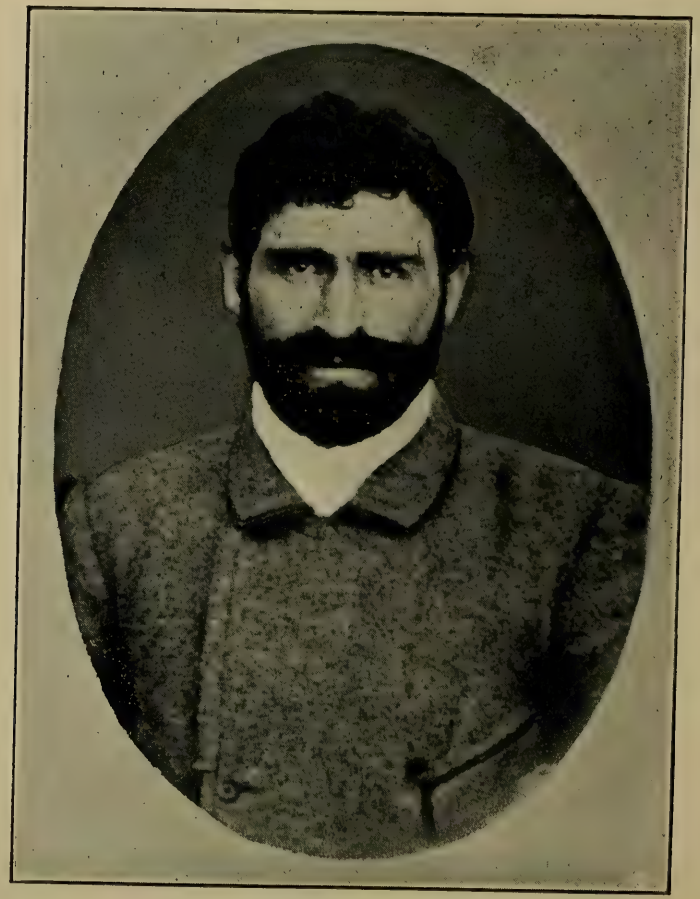
The next morning, with parting hints as to Gilyak etiquette—for our host had come a good deal into contact with the natives in the course of his former duties—and many an addition to our stock of provisions, we left Derbensk for a plunge into the wild interior of the island.

A very primitive *kibitka*, even for Sakhalin, laden with the various sacks, and increased by recent additions to our larder, bore us away, guns in hand, towards the forest. Turning northwards at the prison, we left the dreary stockade on our right, and sped down the long village of convicts' and ex-convicts' huts, which line the wide grassy track. In front of the smithy a horse was being shod, strung up by the legs, topsy-turvy, quite helpless and harmless, and probably not over comfortable. Women were drawing water at wells, that reminded me of the *shadoufs* of Egypt, or *lats* of North-West India, which are like the letter T in shape, the crosspiece see-sawing in the act of drawing up and letting down the bucket. It was only one of the many touches in Russia that strike the observer as Eastern; from the cleanly custom of washing in running water, poured from a can, to the less admired habit of equivocation in diplomacy.

Leaving the village behind, the way passed through a mile or so of clearing before plunging into the forest. Here the open valley and hillsides were so many fields



A SAKHALIN MURDERER.



THE FAMOUS BARRATASVILI.

and slopes of giant stubble, for axe and fire had left the stumps of larch, birch, and spruce on the neutral-tinted slopes.

A deserted saw-mill, built over a torrential stream, witnessed to the lumber work done in the past here by the convicts. It was close by this mill that the famous Barratasvili, the Robin Hood of Sakhalin, met his death. In a moment of weariness he forgot his usual precautions, and taken off his guard, met with the fate he had often meted out to others. Many a story is told over the supper-table of this daring leader; and the reader will see from his portrait, reproduced here, that he was a striking exception to the dull heavy type of Sakhalin criminal. I believe, but am not quite sure, that the crime for which he was despatched to Sakhalin was forgery. My landlord, Mr. M., who had been an overseer in the Alexandrovsk prison, said of him: "During the three and a half years of his incarceration he was well-behaved, and gave no trouble. There were many prisoners with whom I dared not walk a few yards, but with Barratasvili I did not hesitate. After he was let out of gaol as a 'free command' he became a servant in a family, and was most kindly with the children." Suddenly, and to the astonishment of the officials, he escaped and fled to the mainland. Warning, however, was given, and he was arrested at Nikolaevsk and sent back. No sooner was he on shore again, than, midway between the *pristan* and the town, on the road I was so often warned to keep a look-out on, he gave his guard the slip and escaped into the forest. Hard pushed for food, he murdered a merchant who was proceeding from Due to Alexandrovsk with the proceeds of the sale of some horses to the military regiment upon him.

Then, gathering around him three or four companions, he and his band struck terror into many a heart, yet their deeds were aimed against the rich, and he showed himself always willing to aid the poor who in their turned helped

him. Another wayfarer on the road to Due was killed for his gun, and yet another near to my lodging in Alexandrovsk. News of his daring feats were common talk, and many an unsuccessful hunt was made by the authorities. The overseers, too, were on the alert, for such a daring organizer and skilful tactician was a rare prey. Meanwhile, Barratasvili continued to evade the net spread for him, and with consummate daring ventured into the enemy's territory.

One evening my companion told me he was spending the time at Dr. P.'s, when a lieutenant, detained by official duties, arrived about 11 p.m. Apologizing for the lateness of his arrival, he explained that the Governor had ordered him to take one hundred soldiers and search the houses in Alexandrovsk at 3 a.m. for Barratasvili. At the same time he begged of his host secrecy, since his instructions were not to be divulged. The search was unavailing, yet my interpreter met Barratasvili, muffled up in a *shuba* (skin-lined coat), within two paces of the doctor's house, at 7 o'clock the next morning, four hours after the search had commenced!

On another occasion, with four companions partially disguised in their long *shubi*, under which they concealed their revolvers and rifles, he entered the stores kept by Mr. Borradin, which are up the hill towards the back of the town. Posting one of his men at the door to keep watch, he ordered the others to fire. This was merely intended to frighten Mr. Borradin and his assistants, who naturally fled. The robbers then helped themselves to the jewellery from a counter-case, and emptied the till and desk of all the cash, in all about 2000 rubles worth. Emerging into the street, they made good their retreat into the forest, firing a shot or two to warn off venturesome pursuers. Fortunately for them the scene of this escapade was not in the centre of the place, and the noise of shots, if theirs reached that distance, is not an uncommon occurrence in

Alexandrovsk. There are frequent brawls, of which the officials take little notice, and revolvers discharged after an escaping convict, or to signal a fire to the man in the fire-tower. The temerity of this gang did not stop here, for they actually went into the town and had their photographs taken—of course by an ex-convict.

But the net was closing round Barratasvili. His escapades were notorious, and on all sides he was a marked man. It was winter-time when the end came. One day, overcome with fatigue, he ventured off the road into the forest close to the deserted saw-mill, and with his companions fell asleep. An overseer trudging along the road noticed the tracks of his *skis*, and they aroused his suspicions. Ordinary travellers do not leave the road to plunge into the deep snow of the dense forest. He too was tired, but he went back to Derbensk and got a posse of soldiers. Following up the track, step by step through the forest, they came upon the long-sought robbers, resting. The alarm was given. Firing began on both sides. The leader of the gang was hit in the left shoulder, but still continued to fire. The soldiers sought shelter behind tree-trunks; but Barratasvili in taking aim exposed his head, and in so doing was shot in the forehead. Their leader killed, his companions threw down their arms, were taken and beaten by the soldiers with the butt-ends of their muskets. In encounters of this kind, the soldiers, furious at the loss of their comrades, treat their captives most brutally, and in some cases the latter have died from the injuries thus received. On the other hand, it is scarcely more than the convicts expect, nor more than they mete out to a comrade who has broken the rules of their *artel.**

* *Artels*, or guilds, are formed with binding rules and regulations, and a foreman elected to negotiate with the authorities, as among all other crafts. In case of betrayal, the traitor may be sentenced to be "roofed," *i.e.* strangled under a *khalat.*

Three of the four companions of Barratasvili were hanged, two at the south-east corner, and one at the north-west corner of the yard of the "Testing" prison at Alexandrovsk. Such an event, local as it may seem, was one of great rarity in the Russian Empire. Jews may be murdered by the dozen, or peasants shot down in a strike, but murderers have the sacred right of not being executed. At the time a friend was in Alexandrovsk, and between the stockade poles of the testing prison, he saw the body of one of these poor wretches hanging. They were all really strangled, he said, not hanged. A rope, looped round the neck of the condemned, was led over a cross-piece supported by two upright poles; a box was kicked away from the feet of the miserable wretch, and he took his chance of instantaneous death or of strangulation. This one was a minute and a half in the death-struggle.

Russians are very proud of the fact that capital punishment, except for regicide—it amounts to this—does not exist in their country. Sakhalin is, however, under martial law, and while executions are very rare, the murderer of an official, the members of a long-defiant band, and one who has committed an exceptionally atrocious murder, know that they may expect a hanging if caught.

Leaving the mill we plunged into the thick forest. It was a beautiful sunny day, and though the ferns were growing golden, there was scarcely a sign of night frosts twelve inches above the ground. The birds appeared few in number, and could scarcely have been reduced by migrations southwards yet. The commonest were the white (*Motacilla lugens*) and the yellow wagtails (*M. taivana*). Occasionally a jay (*Garrulus brandtii*) flitted before us from tree to tree, a kingfisher (*Alcedo bengalensis*) busied himself by the stream, or a gravelly cliff was passed, riddled with the homes of sand-martins (*Cotyle riparia*). Overhead a hawk soared, or a crow cawed on

READING THE DEATH SENTENCE.

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his lonely way ; underfoot, or under wheel rather, the track became a swamp. For a quarter of a mile or so our way was a floating layer of pine-logs, over which we rattled and bumped and thumped.

The forest was continuous and dense. The most conspicuous trees were birch, larch, elm, and nut (*Panax ricinifolia*), while below was a thick undergrowth of spiræa (*Betulæ folia* ?), which refuses to grow beneath the needle-trees, but keeps company with the larch, wild raspberry, elder, the red whortleberry (*Vaccinium vitisidæa*), wild rose, and great horse-tails (*Equisetum sylvaticum*).

Loudly rang out our drozhky bells through the *taiga*, announcing our presence to any lurking *brodyagi ;* but in Sakhalin, where the post is almost entirely used by officials, warning them also of the heavy penalty attached to the attack on an official. Nevertheless, we had our loaded rifles upon our knees.

A few miles on, two soldiers were passed, trudging gamely along, tracking escaped convicts, a miserable and dangerous business, though they were armed with bayonets. In the previous May and June, of the many *brodyagi* at large, according to the official report, five had been killed by soldiers in that district (Timovsk *okrug*), and thirteen during April, May, and June in the Korsakovsk *okrug*. Eighteen officially admitted to have been shot, during attempted capture, in less than three months, testified to the number at large. Our way became nothing but a grass track, and occasionally at the base of a valley a stream had to be crossed by a primitive bridge of loose pine-poles, laid on cross-pieces, which rattled and slipped under our horses' hoofs. As we neared a small village our *izvostchik*, a careless fellow, drove into the midst of five or six swine, and one of the horses kicked over the traces and fell, but we, leaping out, saved ourselves from an overthrow into the *mêlée* of kicking and struggling steeds. The two soldiers, overtaking us, helped to extricate the

frightened animal, which was bleeding at the mouth. Annoying as it was, we strongly urged the driver to return for the sake of the horse, but he refused, regarding it as a slight injury.

Arrived at Slavo about midday, our further progress in this manner was barred, and other means had to be sought, if indeed any other were forthcoming, which seemed doubtful ; for it was not there, as in India with its trains, whereof the simple lama in "Kim" had heard in his Tibetan lama-serai, that "one but asks a question and pays money, and the appointed persons despatch all to the appointed place."

CHAPTER VIII

SLAVO TO ADO TIM

A start is made on the 600-mile canoe journey—A settlement of ill-repute—So-called "civil marriage"—A terrible environment for children—Doubtful quarters.

DUMPING our miscellaneous baggage at the house that did duty for a *stantsiya*, or post-house, we made our way on foot through the forest edge to the river. Here, coming upon an encampment of Gilyak natives for the first time, I was struck with their resemblance to the North-American Indians; their swarthy figures, high cheek-bones, raven hair and mocassined legs, the impression being heightened by their paddling a dug-out canoe. From the huts emerged one or two of their women-folk, short and stunted, and some black-haired, gipsy-looking children, who stared shyly at us.

Accosting one of the three men who appeared to be the senior, we made known our wish to descend the river to its mouth (about 200 miles). Would he take us? A Russian youth, who had guided us to the river, made himself understood partly in Russian and partly in the Gilyak tongue. A categorical "No!" was the answer. It was spawning-time, and he must lay in provisions of *yukola* (dried fish) against the winter. "Well, then, will you take us as far as Ado Tim, where, perhaps, we may find another Gilyak willing to paddle us further?" Ado Tim was the next village, about twenty miles down the river.

"No; not for 1000 rubles!" But after considerable

haggling, his demands fell in a degree unparalleled except in the East; for from 1000 rubles his fee dropped to three rubles per nose (6 r.), and finally he agreed to undertake the trip for four rubles (8*s.* 6*d.*), which we considered a handsome reduction on his first demand.

Returning to the Russian village, we found a peasant's cart and an earless pony, wherewith to get our baggage down to the river. The poor pony had been robbed of its ears by a bear; how the rest of it escaped I never heard. It was probably the same bear of which the villagers complained to us. *Mishka*, as they nicknamed him, was in the habit of paying nightly visits to their outhouses, and making free with their live-stock. They had lain in wait for him, but all their efforts had been unsuccessful, Bruin proving quite equal to his reputation for 'cuteness.

The volume and weight of our baggage called forth some murmurings on the part of the Gilyaks. Indeed, they were not unreasonable in this, for their craft are slight and keel-less, and easily upset. However, by stowing all our chattels away in the middle, and ourselves likewise at the bottom of the canoe, towards the ends—for there are, of course, no seats—with the two Gilyaks at the extreme ends, we managed to satisfy our native "paddlers."

At last our 600-mile canoe journey had really commenced; at least, so we hoped, though we were as yet only sure of accomplishing twenty miles of it. However, one does not trouble one's head about possibilities in such circumstances, but just meets difficulties as they arise.

It was a lovely afternoon as our primitive bark, paddled by strange pigtailed creatures, glided down the still reaches of the river into the unknown. Overhead was a glorious blue sky, to right and left a virgin forest, and over all a stillness unbroken save by the plash of salmon, or the quiet word of command in an unknown tongue. Occasionally a phalanx of wild geese flew silently across the

blue, or a bevy of wild ducks rising from the water fled onward, skimming the surface, to a safe distance.

Then silent enjoyment gave place to expectation, for word was passed to have our guns ready for the appearance of Bruin. Keeping close watch on the banks, and looking ahead to the bend of the river if haply we might spy him undisturbed, my camera was got ready for action at the same time as my gun ; but, as might be expected with all such preparations perfect, "Master Petz" did not put in an appearance. It was not until late in the evening that he was observed by our natives, who followed him up the next morning. Many a footprint of his kind we saw on the sandy edge, but he was 'cute enough to frequent the river for fishing and drinking at night, excepting occasionally when the desire for a snack or a drink overcame his prudence.

Our light craft sped quickly onwards, and many a rapid was skilfully shot, and rattling pebbly shoal safely overpast, for our Gilyak elder had lived on this part of the Tim all his life, and knew every bend and every rapid "as he did his five fingers," so he said. Before sunset we were nearing Ado Tim, the last Russian penal settlement of all in the northern interior. The native village of that name was situated on the banks lower down, but the settlement lay half a verst from the river.

We had no wish to arrest our progress here, the settlement had a very bad reputation, and we would rather camp in the open, or among the natives, from what we had heard ; but the natives refused to take us further except at a prohibitive price, and we went ashore, hoping that time would settle our difference. This was not to be, however, and we once more found our way blocked. Having made preparations, and bought stores, etc., for three or four weeks' journey, at the end of the second day we were threatened with "no thoroughfare." It was unfortunate that our journey should coincide with the

spawning season, for it was a serious matter to the Gilyaks to forego their period of winter's provisioning.

But for the nonce we had to find a resting-place for ourselves and baggage; so pressing two soldiers, who had been bathing, into our service, and taking our natives, we formed a small cavalcade across the swampy track leading to the village. On either side of the broad grass track of the settlement was a row of higgledy-piggledy, miserably poor, out-of-repair log-huts, with tiny windows, some roofed with boards, others with loose pieces of bark. Pigs, a foal or two, and a few children, miserably clad, were indiscriminately scattered on the "road." *Kita** hung curing in the smoke of a fire kindled beneath, and bunches of withering green leaves by the hutside in the sun betokened tobacco drying. Women wandered about barefooted, and they and the men were in the scantiest of clothing, the latter in a cotton shirt and trousers, and the former simply in a frock and an extra bodice. It was always a matter of wonder to me how in autumn mornings and late afternoons they could stand the cold so miserably clothed.

Each village has its overseer, who is a soldier. In rank he may be compared to a sergeant, but his duties are as varied as those of a prefect in France, or even a deputy-commissioner in India. Police, military, the census, agriculture, and "roads," all these and more come within his cares; and for this he is paid the magnificent sum of thirty rubles (three guineas) a month. Tracking escaped convicts was not the least important of his functions at Ado Tim, and he was away down the river on this errand when we arrived. Entering his hut at the head of the village we found seven soldiers; including the two we had passed in the morning, who had arrived, hot and dusty, by the road which effected a short cut over the river route.

The question of our night quarters had first to be

* The East Siberian name for *Salmo lagocephalus*.

settled. The soldiers, somewhat impressed by my companion, who still wore on his chain the silver eagle of the Imperial cavalry regiment, to which he had in the old days belonged, offered us a share of their room. The prospect might not have troubled a Russian, but to sleep nine in a room of about 14 × 12 feet, with doors shut and windows shuttered, was not calculated to appeal to an Englishman. We were devouring some black bread and drinking a glass of tea while discussing the situation, when through a window we caught sight of the round, honest face of a woman, barefooted, driving a few cows into the village. Mr. X. called out in Russian fashion, "*Maya tyotushka!* (My auntie!) will you give us some milk?" When she had seen the cows home, she arrived with her hands full, carrying not only milk but butter. What did it matter that it was prolific of undissolved salt crystals, like a section of conglomerate clay with fragments of imbedded quartz? For us it was a welcome luxury in our slender larder for days. While she was weighing out the salt crystal butter on primitive scales, consisting of a tiny thin rod of iron poised by a piece of string, the loop being shifted along the bar to determine the exact measure, I stood watching her jolly face, and it suddenly occurred to me that she might help us out of our difficulty of obtaining a night's lodging. I had just mentioned the matter to Mr. X., when our attention was called off to the natives, who were still lingering around the door of the hut demanding a prohibitive price for the journey to the sea. We resumed the discussion, but they would abate nothing, and evidently were not keen on going.

Moving on as we talked to the middle of the village, a crowd gathered around us, a motley group of Gilyaks, men and children, pigtailed and unwashed, and of Russian convicts for the most part of a low, brutal type. We had been warned to be on the alert with these villagers, and as I stood an onlooker of the scene, while my interpreter

talked with them, I involuntarily found my attention drawn to two or three suspiciously cruel-looking loungers on the outskirts of the crowd, some of whom wore ugly-looking knives at their belts.

It appeared from the talk that there was a flat-bottomed semi-boat, semi-punt, down at the river, which belonged to the Crown. His Imperial Majesty the Tsar is probably not aware of the fact, and whether he would have objected or not, the men of the village had no scruples in offering to take us in it. One black-haired, dark visaged individual, a Little Russian * obviously, with a pleasant expression, inviting yet at the same time repelling our confidence, a doubtful face, offered with four others to take us to the sea and back in an impossible time for a reasonable sum. It seemed a way out of our difficulty, but I had my doubts about the prudence of trusting our lives day and night to five strange convicts from this penal settlement of ill-repute.

In our difficulties we turned to our newly adopted "aunt," in front of whose log-hut we were then standing. A long discussion ensued. She said that "it is difficult to know what to do for the best. There are awful characters in the place, who will simply take the first opportunity of murdering you for your stores." She and her husband would long ago have been killed, for it was known that they had saved a little, had it not been for their fierce watch-dog. Anyhow, what she should say was this, "take two of them—you are two and well-armed, and would be a match for them—yes, take two of them, but don't let them go far with you—get Gilyaks as soon as you can—for these men (convicts) capsized Mr. K. (a Russian prospector) in the rapids. They don't know the river as do the natives."

We thanked her, but asked did she know anything about this Little Russian, personally?

* Little Russia is that portion of south-western European Russia which lies around Kiev.

A SAKHALIN MURDERESS. [*To face page* 141.

Well, she wasn't sure—of course she knew him—but she would ask her man, and would tell the other to come at 6 o'clock in the morning.

More and more impressed with her jolly face, and not disappointed with her partner, who appeared to be quiet and respectable, we decided to ask the shelter of their roof. Sending word of our decision to the soldiers, they brought round our baggage, and also a message, delivered aside to Mr. X., that "it was hardly safe to trust ourselves where we were, for we might be robbed in the night."

What had been the crimes of this woman and her man I do not know, but the law provides that any female criminal under forty, whose sentence is not less than two years, may be sent from Russia to Sakhalin. On arrival at Alexandrovsk they are placed altogether in the *kamera* at the south-east corner of the prison buildings. I have often seen them—those of them that had been retained by the officials, nominally for cleaning and sewing purposes, I say nominally, because the real purpose was openly known; the others, chosen by "exile-settlers," who are allowed thus to take a helpmate, are released from confinement within barracks, and live with their "men," though they are still obliged to do their hard-labour task.

There is no marriage ceremony. The choice being made with the sanction of the *nachalnik* of the *okrug*, their names are written in a book, and henceforth the couple dwell together. A policy such as this, which violates our notions of the sacredness of the marriage tie, and directly encourages a criminal breed, must be regarded in the light of an attempt on the part of the Government to settle and colonize Sakhalin. A previous scheme had been tried, and failed. In 1862, and again in 1869, a few free colonists had been sent to the island, but they all ultimately left for a less lonely and arduous life.

By settling the exiles down with partners in life and families, the Government also hoped to avoid the letting loose

of large numbers of ex-convicts of Sakhalin on the mainland. That might again have raised the expressed dislike of the Siberians, particularly the Russians of Western Siberia, to their land being over-run with the worst characters. The cry is one that we are familiar with in the history of our Australian Colonies. It became really importunate in Russia in the late eighties. *Brodyagi*—passportless vagabonds—had been despatched wholesale across the border into Siberia, and the country was over-run with escaping members of this fraternity. On this subject, A. Leroy-Beaulieu, quoting official figures, says, " . . . on January 1, 1876, over 51,000 persons were entered on the registers of the government of Tobolsk as penal colonists, and only 34,000 could be produced by the local administration. . . . These figures, together with the carelessness of the local authorities, bear witness to the inefficiency of the system. . . . In the 'governments' of Tomsk and Yeniseisk, in 1883, there were, out of 20,000 exiles (all classes exiled, not merely 'exile-settlers') registered in different communes, only 2600 actually residing in the places assigned them ; over 17,000 were fugitives." That this state of things has improved with the advancing settlement of the country is true, though let not the reader think for a moment that the *brodyaga* fraternity fails to number its thousands to-day. Irkutsk which competes with Tomsk for the title of premier city of Siberia, like London, attracts large numbers of that profession generally dubbed the "light-fingered." This is a misnomer for the Siberian members. Hard life in the *taiga* does not conduce to delicate fingering, and the murder of their victim is a *sine quâ non* in the pursuit of the profession. It is said that two murders in the nucleus of the city, and fourteen in the outskirts, is the weekly average of Irkutsk. And daylight or publicity are not shunned either, for just previous to my visit two had taken place in the high street in the daytime.

Security of life and property spell for the Exchequer greater potential receipts, and this was another reason why the importunities of the Siberians should be listened to. Hence it was that in 1888, Mr. Galkin Vrassky, afterwards head of the general prison administration, recommended that all *brodyagi* should be sent, not to the Siberian mainland, but to the island of Sakhalin, where, escaping from control, they could do little harm at large in the *taiga*, while the sea and ice would be effective prison walls. This was tantamount to a declaration that in future Siberia was to be first and foremost a colony, while the convicts must be more and more confined to restricted areas. This policy has culminated in the *ukaz* of 1900, which nominally abolished deportation from January 1, 1902 (O.S.).

The attempt to settle free colonists on Sakhalin having failed, what has been the result of the second method of "civil marriage"? On the whole, even the officials, I think, would admit it to be a failure.

That the couples remain is true, but it is because they cannot get away, and are practically forced exiles; the majority, regarding the land as their prison-island, strive no more than is necessary to gain a bare existence. How those few bright exceptions to this crushed, energyless majority long to put an end to their exile, was brought home to me when, returning from Arkovo, where we had supped with the farmer who was "passing rich" as the owner of three cows, I remarked to my companion, "I suppose an exile-settler, such as he, who has been here fifteen years, has a wife and children, and is doing well, very well as Sakhalin standards are, is quite content to live here?"

"Why!" he replied, "he only asked me just now, 'Did I think there was *any* hope of his getting away back home to Russia?'" With the second generation, it is possible, this may not be so.

There are other results that have to be taken into account, and which ought to give the Government pause. In the first place, the moral effect on the woman who is chosen as a mate, is, in the majority of cases, terrible; and in the second place, the offspring of such a union is convict by heredity and demoralized by environment.

On this subject, Mr. Zhook, quoting Mr. P. A. Salomon, who was Director-in-Chief of Russian Prisons from 1896, says, "The so-called concubines, *i.e.* the exiled women who are given to the settlers to help them, and for the mutual management of their households, consider themselves as having the right freely to dispose of themselves; and they leave their partners if the latter try to prevent them admitting outside visitors. Usually, however, this is not the case, as the co-habitants share all their earnings." Mr. Zhook adds, "Deprived of all civil rights, she loses by law the right to have a family; but it is impossible to deprive her of the right to feel disgust towards the forced co-habitation; and once she forsakes her 'master' there is no other way open to her but to settle down with another one. This, indeed, is that 'hard labour' to which criminal women are subjected." At the same time, it should be pointed out, that the women being in the minority,* the power to leave their "men" has a restraining effect, and in the event of their doing so they have a choice, miserable as that may be.

There is even a sadder aspect of this matter. It is the effect upon the free population, the wives of convicts who have joined them, but more especially the free-born children. All around them are openly vicious practices

* The numbers of men and women on the island who had been sent out as convicts were, on January 1, 1898, respectively 19,770, and 2397, or in round numbers in the proportion of 8 to 1. The ratio is reduced by the presence of 1308 women who followed their condemned husbands to the island. Only six men did this in the case of their wives being despatched to Sakhalin as criminals.

and scenes of unblushing prostitution. The very "game" of concubinage is in vogue in the mixed schools. To say that fathers traded with their daughters is to say little. I had great difficulty, I am not sure that I succeeded, in convincing a highly educated prisoner of rank, familiar with English literature, that fathers did not stand in the streets of London offering their daughters for sale. His experience on Sakhalin only confirmed some garbled reports of London life retailed by Russian papers. It would be impossible—and probably incredible to the reader—for me to mention the many terrible things I heard, but I feel it only due to the children of Sakhalin, if any reform is to be brought about, to quote a statement which I should not have dared to make myself, but which comes from one of unquestioned authority. What more awful charge against the officials and the criminal population can be made than in these words, "There is not a girl over nine years of age on the island who is a virgin."

The question of heredity in crime is still engaging the attention of criminologists, but there is a growing opinion in favour of the enforced celibacy of the worst criminals. Mr. Geo. Griffith, in his vivid narrative of a visit to the French penal settlement of New Caledonia, speaks with no uncertain voice on this subject. After describing the courtship and marriage of convicts there, he shows us pictures of contented couples with prosperous homes; but he will not spare the truth, and adds, "The administration claimed success for it on the ground that none of the children of such marriages have ever been convicted of an offence against the law. Nevertheless, the Government have most wisely put a stop to this revolting parody on the most sacred of human institutions, and now wife-murderers may no longer marry prisoners or infanticides, with full liberty to reproduce their species and have them educated by the State, to afterwards take their place as free citizens of the colony. . . ." And later,

"When the boys (children of convicts) were lined up before us in the playground, I saw about seventy-six separate and distinct reasons for the abolition of convict marriages. On every face and form were stamped the unmistakable brands of criminality, imbecility, moral crookedness, and general degeneration, not all on each one, but there were none without some."

The unwisdom of continuing the breed of criminals is, I believe, forcing itself on the minds of the Russian authorities, but in Russia reforms move slowly through the vast machinery of bureaucracy.

The re-marriage, if so the civil contract can be called, of wives who have been deported to Sakhalin, depends on their husbands remaining in Russia ; but since there were only six on the island who had followed their wives, the chance, therefore, of a wife on Sakhalin ever being joined by her husband is extremely small, as is her return to Russia ; hence the "civil marriage" or concubinage. In very many cases the deported wife has herself destroyed the chance by murdering her husband, for which crime she finds herself on Sakhalin. For out of the number of murderers on January 1, 1898, then engaged in hard labour (2836 and there were probably three or more times this number if we include ex-convicts), 634 were women, most of whom had murdered their husbands. Strictly speaking, the priests on Sakhalin refuse to give the sanction of a religious ceremony to such unions, unless a formal dissolution has been taken out by the innocent spouse left behind in Russia.

Madame Gregoriev, our hostess at Ado Tim, was a rare exception to her class, and with her "better half," known far and wide, I afterwards learned, as honest and thrifty. She was equally far removed from the slow, time-is-no-object Russian. Her day began at dawn, and included the tending of the cows and work in the fields, as well as her domestic duties. At dusk the shutters were duly

barred for safety before attempting to light up. A rich feast of a platter of rice and milk was placed before my companion and myself, which we shared in primitive fashion. Conversation ranged from the news of the village, and the last *brodyaga* shot by the trackers, to the country of my origin; after which our host, with true politeness, offered us their only bed; but, refusing to disturb them, we elected to sleep on the floor. Hay was brought, our rugs spread, and we lay down with revolvers under our extemporized pillows, trusting that if an enemy came it might not be one of "our own household."

Strange it seemed when one's thoughts did wing homewards to England to be lying here on the floor of a hut, in the depths of the *taiga*, with two convicts whose crime for all we knew was murder, stranger still when the flickering light of a tallow candle showed two reverently bowed figures repeating inaudible prayers before the *ikoni*. Truly a picture for a Russian Millet!

CHAPTER IX

ON THE RIVER TIM

"Each facing our man with arms loaded"—A notorious thief and Ivan Dontremember—An ex-naval captain shot—A native's idea of measurement—A village possessing seven bears—Dug-outs in course of making.

THE night passed without incident, and an early rise enabled us to interview our overnight acquaintance, the Little Russian, despatch breakfast, and make a start by 6.45 a.m.

We finally arranged that our crew should consist of two men only, and that they were to paddle us down stream in the hope of our finding Gilyaks at one of their villages on the banks, who would be willing to take us to the coast. It was agreed that we should go a day's journey at least in the attempt, and if we failed by sunset —well—we left the future, *à la Russe*, to Providence. Our men were obliging, but they gave us to understand that they could only go a few hours down the river ; and made much of the many days the return journey would take them against stream.

Once more we marched to the river bank, an imposing cavalcade including Madame Gregoriev herself, who insisted on carrying by no means the lightest of our many bundles. Here a curious phenomenon, which I have witnessed nowhere else, appeared. An arc of mist, rainbow-like but white, dense and broad, rose and fell in the river, with a chord, as well as I could judge, of about one to

one and a half miles. This was at 6.50 a.m., and in ten minutes it had disappeared before the sun's rays. I can only attribute the phenomenon to air currents, but how or why I am unable to explain.

On the bank was our native crew of the previous day just setting off to track a bear up stream. A little lower down were some Russian villagers spearing salmon from the bank. A well-aimed thrust, followed by a moment or two of wriggling, while the thong-held hook gripped tight, and the great struggling, gleaming fish was on the bank. In less than five minutes another followed, and so on, for they were literally romping, splashing, swimming with dorsal fin above the surface, and cutting all sorts of mad capers in the river.

Others ageing, as could be seen by their dirty colour, distorted jaws, and large hooked teeth, and exhausted by the long journey from the sea against the strong current, were pitifully gasping with gills above water, shortly to join their companions lying dead in numbers on the shoals.

Bidding our hostess "*Da svidaniya*" (till we meet again), we took our seats, each facing our man with arms loaded. It was a nuisance to have to keep such a close watch on our oarsmen, but it was not unnatural that our arms and baggage should be a source of great temptation to them.

The object of all those who escape from prison or from police surveillance is to get enough money or stores to enable them to escape from the island. Some successful attempts have been made to get away to Japan or America, but they are mostly matters of past history, and the privations suffered have been almost greater than on their prison island.

Mr. A. H. S. Landor mentions that the Ainus of Yezo told him of four Russians from Sakhalin, who escaped in an open boat and landed half-starved and unable to make

themselves understood on the coast near Cape Soya; and, he adds, that the natives told him of many dead bodies, probably of unfortunate convicts, washed ashore there.

Many years ago a party of fugitives were picked up in the Pacific and landed in America; and Mr. D., a Scotchman, and partner in a Russian firm exporting bêche-de-mer, etc., from South Sakhalin, whom I met in Vladivostok, gave me an account of his meeting them there and recognizing some who had worked for him.

More commonly efforts are made by a gang to cross the narrowest part of the Straits of Tartary to the mainland between Capes Pogobi and Muraviev. It seems a terrible risk, and not worth the escape from confinement, to run the gauntlet of being tracked down or shot, or to die of starvation, cold, or shipwreck; but as a doctor on the island said to me, so great is their longing to be free, that many of the prisoners would willingly exchange their hard fare and confinement "for two or three days' freedom and the breath of fresh air with the risk of being shot."

Those in the *kandalnaya turma*, or "chained prison," at Alexandrovsk, are kept in idleness, an idleness and ennui only relieved by surreptitious gambling. If they have no money or secret store of food, and there are extraordinary underground ways of possessing themselves of these, the Crown tools lent them to repair their boots will be staked, then their clothes, and finally their rations even to a month ahead. Should the gamester lose all these, he regards the last as a debt of honour, and he succeeds in paying it in a novel manner. In fact, it reflects a standard of honour that even Monte Carlo could not exceed. The loser is put into a cell, and with his own consent starved for every two days, and fed on the third, thus accumulating rations to his credit which are taken in payment of his debt.

But even relieved by an occasional game of cards, the

ennui of years of confinement in idleness is terrible. Is it surprising that the prisoner feels anything is better than that? With the spring comes the longing, increasing with the lengthening days, to breathe the air of freedom, to go where he pleases, and to rest where he chooses. The *taiga matushka*—the dear mother *taiga*—is calling. Oh! the passionate desire to stretch one's limbs full length on the sweet-smelling earth and listen to the rustling of the leaves, the music of the woods, the merry voice of stream and bird. Oh! to live and die in the arms of "Mother Forest," free as the bird that cleaves the air with joyous wing.

And so the risk is lost to sight in the passionate longing to be once more free; but this is not all, for there is yet another chance for the poor *brodyaga* even if he be captured. Should he escape being shot by the trackers, or if he give himself up voluntarily, as many do on the approach of winter, he will be flogged and once more imprisoned, but he may possibly get off with a diminution of his original sentence. It happens in this way. If identified, he will have his sentence lengthened by an addition; but if he professes to have forgotten his name and family, and whence he comes, and he cannot be identified, there is nothing to be done but to sentence him as a *brodyaga* to four years' hard labour. On Sakhalin it is not so easy to outwit the authorities as in the vast region of the mainland, but should he succeed, this "Mr. Ivan Dont-remember" scores considerably.

This was the story of the Little Russian now sitting face to face with me. It was truly astonishing to me how these men expanded when away from the officials. My interpreter, himself a convict, they regarded as one of themselves. Our "captain," as we called him, was a bright, intelligent individual, with a good fund of stories; and obviously he would have been the life of our party, until such time as he chose to compass the death of it. According

to his version, he was forty-seven years old, an "exile-settler," and his name was Marokin. Originally sentenced to twenty-two years' hard labour, he had succeeded in making his escape on the mainland. Captured at large, and recognized, five years were added to his sentence. Of this whole twenty-seven years he had done but one and a half before he again made a bid for freedom in Siberia. Yet again he was recaptured, but on this occasion he had forgotten his commune and his *familiya imya* (surname), and was therefore despatched to Sakhalin for four years. He could now chuckle over his success in outwitting the officials, having done but five and a half instead of twenty-seven years. All this and much more he told us; and some days later we had his story corroborated by other convicts, old companions of his, whom we came upon—excepting in one particular. His name, they said, was not Marokin, but Grodiyanka, the famous thief of Kiev.

The river, which was about one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet wide at Slavo, was broadening steadily as we descended. Shoals and rapids, however, still testified to its shallowness, and necessitated the use of paddles for yet two more days' journey. The pebbly bottomed rapids were shot safely, though not with the skill of the natives. Our boat, a cross between a boat and a punt, was a clumsier affair than the native dug-out canoe, and our men had only a nodding acquaintance with the river. It leaked out in the course of conversation that there was another reason why they were not anxious to take us far. They had no right to the Crown boat, and an official was expected who would require it.

There had been a sad affair of *brodyaga* shooting down the river, and in accordance with regulations the prison doctor from Derbensk had to make a post-mortem. He was expected in our wake, and his only means of progress was the Crown boat which we, unofficial persons, were using. The picture of this doctor, kicking his heels and perhaps

portions of the anatomy of other people as well at Ado Tim, for a few days, did not harrow my feelings as much as might be expected, at least the kicking of his own person did not, since we had heard from the lips of the good wife of the ex-overseer at Derbensk the following story about him. It appears that the son of a comparatively well-to-do man, an ex-convict merchant, came to him to ask him to go to his father, who was very ill. The doctor refused point-blank. It was after 2 o'clock, and his official hours ceased then. The poor man offered him money, but to no purpose, and going home in despair found his father already dead. Our informant added that the doctor was certainly cruel, but that on this occasion, to do him justice, he was probably drunk. At any rate, one hopes that, long as are doctors' hours in this country, for the sake of us poor patients the medical profession will not form a trade union or join the early closing association.

The story of the death of the *brodyaga*, which he was now on his way to investigate, or rather report on, for it was merely a formal proceeding, had been the chief topic of conversation at Ado Tim, the affair being recent, and the actors in the scene present. The story assumed different aspects with our various informants. According to the soldiers' tale, he had been caught beyond the mouth of the river on the north-east coast, and their overseer from Ado Tim had been despatched with two or three of their number to bring him back. It is several days' journey up the river, but they had scarcely gone two, when he made his escape, the soldiers having left him with the boatmen while they went off to shoot their dinner. The boatmen were themselves ex-convicts, in fact one was Grodiyanka (*alias* Marokin) himself, and they wouldn't put themselves in the way of an escape of a *brodyaga*, especially as he was a *barin* in their eyes ; for he had been a naval captain, so I learned later, and spoke French fluently. These men,

therefore, left the boat, and were of course overcome with surprise on their return to find the prisoner flown! Taking with him the bag of biscuits, or rather roasted pulled black bread, he fled into the forest. The soldiers, coming back, were naturally wroth, but they could do nothing at once, for tracking in this virgin forest and swamp-land is difficult and dangerous. How well-nigh impossible it is to find one's way in this dense Siberian *taiga* one realizes in tracking a bear. A Gilyak village was therefore sought, and natives and their dogs brought to track down the unfortunate ex-captain. The soldiers' version of the sequel was that, coming up with him, one of their number fell upon him and tried to make him captive, but the *brodyaga*, attempting to wrest the soldier's gun from him, was shot in self-defence by his would-be captor. "Then," they added, "the Gilyak tracker fired the fatal shot."

Grodiyanka, however, said the shots were in the back, and he believed that the soldiers merely picked off the fugitive when they sighted him so as to save further trouble. *Se non è vero, è ben trovato.* Gilyaks, whom we afterwards met, said that Grodiyanka and his fellow-oarsmen had not only indirectly assisted the ex-captain to escape, but had stolen forty military cartridges from the overseer to give the prisoner. They added that the latter had built himself a wooden shelter, roofed with grass, and when the soldiers came upon him, knowing they would probably shoot him, he rushed out and embraced the nearest soldier, so that it was with difficulty he could get his gun free and shoot. The natives affirmed that the prisoner was shot in the breast.

Four days later we passed the spot where the body lay and has since been interred, a lonely grave in the solitude of the primeval forest, one of so many hundreds of lone lost ones of whom few received this last act of fellow-man—a friendly covering of earth to protect them from the prowling beast or the eagles that hovered high

A GILYAK TRACKER OF "BRODYAGI."

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over the scene of their death struggle. Outlawed and degraded, driven to the depths of cold unfeeling cruelty, did they remember in that hour their childhood's days and a mother's tender care? Now no hand was there to smooth the aching brow or moisten the parched lips of the helpless one lost, alone in the vast forest—none save the *taiga matushka* herself!

The banks of the river were low for the most part, broken by the rise of an occasional limestone cliff of about thirty feet in height. Bending over from the tops of these, toppling headlong, halfway down or already lying prone in the water, were larches and birches; while the stretches of low bank were thickly dotted with poplars and nut-trees; and overhanging the river's edge were willows and alders, giving hiding-place to a bevy of ducks here and there.

Though we had left behind the last Russian settlement at Ado Tim, three or four rude shelters were passed in the course of the morning, which were occupied during the spawning season by a few Russian "exile-settlers" for the catching and salting down of salmon against the winter's needs. At a bend of the river we came upon one of these shelters, and five men dragging a seine-net, about two hundred feet long, which contained one hundred or so of plunging and splashing *kita*. At another of these rude huts, which housed a solitary Russian and some barrels of salt and dried grass, we stopped to discuss our midday meal—a duck we had shot during the morning. Our men behaved very well, and though the keen edge of our distrust was wearing off, we did not look forward to spending a night with them or to the prospect of night watches.

Occasionally we came upon a Gilyak village, consisting of half a dozen huts or so, and at each one hailed any visible member of the community, inquiring if there were not men who would take us; but they all with one accord made excuses. Either the able-bodied were away fishing,

or the only person available was ill or had no safe canoe; and so our hopes of a native crew, and even of the prosecution of our journey, were growing ominously less, when about 4 o'clock we espied a native canoe paddled by a single Gilyak arrayed in all the glory of mocassins, pigtail, and Manchu hat. We hailed him, asking—

"Will you take us to the mouth of the river and back?"

"No."

"We will give you twenty rubles."

"No, I must catch fish for the winter stores."

"Yes, but if we give you money you can buy stores."

This shaft of logic winged its way, for it produced some slight hesitation on his part, and his canoe was edged a little nearer to ours. We were not *brodyagi*, or "exile-settlers," evidently by our quantities of baggage. But still—no—he was not at all keen for the business. There followed more eloquent persuasion on our part, and he relented so far as to offer to take us for thirty rubles, which after considerable haggling was reduced to twenty-five; not an exorbitant sum for the eighteen days during which he and a companion were to be at our service, and on twelve of which they were to paddle, row, and punt us. This was the "market price," however, and though no perquisites had been part of the stipulation, the frequent request, "Will the 'princes' give some gunpowder, brick-tea, sugar, or tobacco?" was seldom refused.

Our new acquaintance's name was Vanka,* and he must go down stream to the next village of Irr Kirr to fetch a companion, his cousin—how many times removed I am not in a position to state. The cousin's name was Armunka, that is as near to it as we could get in Russian. I am afraid we never really appreciated Armunka at his true social position—at least, not until we found him

* This is really Russian nomenclature, Vanka being a diminutive of Ivan, as Bertie of Herbert.

half-drunk, and then we learnt his aristocratic claims. But that comes later in the story. Lashing the canoe to ours, we proceeded to descend the river to Irr Kirr. Time passed, and still we did not sight the village, and so we asked how far off it was.

"Six bends of the river!"

There are bends and bends, and the information lacked something of definiteness, as the countryman's mile in England, or the peasant's *stunde* in Germany; but after we had been assured more than once that there was but one bend more, we tried a different tack, and asked, "How many versts is it?"

"One," came the answer, and a little later, "Two!" This mode of progression was, to say the least of it, not satisfactory, and we harked back to the beginning of the book of weights and measures.

"How many *sazhen** are there in a verst?"

"Thirty!" And then he added triumphantly, "*A verst is not long, but very narrow!*"

And with this Euclidean definition we were fain to be content. It wanted yet an hour to sunset when we reached Irr Kirr. Here, with some relief, we dismissed our Russians, who were undisguisedly delighted with a pay of twelve rubles, and picked up our fresh crew.

Something has been already said of the Gilyaks as a race in Chapter VI. The illustrations will give the reader a better idea than any detailed description. I will, therefore, merely refer to a few points. The Gilyak is short of stature, about 5 feet 3 inches in height, spare of limb, and, though often wiry, scarcely robust. His women-folk scarcely exceed 4 feet 6 inches. His complexion is tawny, gipsy-like, but not yellow, and his hair, which he wears in a pigtail, is raven black. Altogether his features betoken a mixed race. Though he has the brachycephalic (round) head, the broad face, and high cheek-bones of the Mongol,

* 1 *sazhen* = 7 feet, 500 *sazh.* = 1 verst.

yet the slight brow ridges, big mouth, prominent lips, and flattened nasal bridge of the latter are considerably modified in his case. The majority of Gilyaks possess the hairless faces of the Mongol, and perhaps the exceptions who have bushy beards are descendants of Ainu and Gilyak ancestors.

In summer they used to dress in fish-skins,* and in winter in seal- or dog-skins. Gradually Chinese cotton (*ta-pu*) has filtered in through Manchuria, and largely taken the place of fish-skins, though this material is still used for parts of the dress, especially of the Gilyak woman ; and when visiting a Gilyak headman I found a mat of salmon-skins, stitched together, spread in my honour. In winter the men wear coats of dog-skins, but the women favour seal-skin, the short bristly hair being less in the way in their domestic occupations. The men add to their coat in winter a short petticoat of seal-skin. In summer they go bare-footed, except on journeys when, as in winter, they use mocassins of seal-skin, the hair on the outside of the leg portion only.

For underclothing, a *ta-pu* shirt, "shorts," and long gaiters, or spatter-dashes, like the Chinese, are worn by the men ; and by the women long gaiters only, and a shirt or two of cotton or fish-skin. The outer tunic of the Gilyak woman, or rather frock, for it possesses sleeves, has Chinese cash coins strung round the border, which reaches just below the knees.

The Gilyaks are veritable children of the forest, finding their home, food, and gods therein. Cultivation of the soil is unknown to them, and they live mainly on fish and the flesh of beasts that fall to their snares. By bartering the skins of such animals they obtain tobacco, brick-tea, etc. They have both summer and winter dwellings,

* Salmon (*Salmo lagocephalus* and *S. proteus*, which are known in Eastern Siberia as *kïta* and *gorbusha* respectively).

GILYAK WIFE AND MAIDEN.

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constructed of timber and bark, a full description of which I will leave until later.

Vanka having found his cousin, a man of rather bigger build than himself, and informed him of our proposal, they declared themselves ready within a few minutes. So natural is it for these people to be wandering, so much at home are they on river and in forest, that scarcely any preparation was necessary for this journey of nearly three weeks. It reminded me of a story of a friend's experience in the far west of Canada. He was on a survey party, and in the forest they came one day upon a solitary Indian, who had evidently strayed far from his home. They said, "Why, you are lost!" "No," he replied, "me no lost, wigwam lost."

Their preparations did not include P. and O. overland trunks or hat-cases, familiarly labelled "Not Wanted," but simply a seal's stomach filled with oil, a scraggy bit of dried fish, a few leaves of tobacco, an old double-barrelled fowling-piece, in a home-made seal-skin cover, a fish-spear, and an outer garment each—this was the sum total of their baggage. Established as before in our new craft, each of us sitting at the bottom of the canoe, and facing our men with the baggage in the centre between us, we set off once more to advance our journey by a few more versts before twilight compelled us to camp.

How different, however, was our progress, and with what buoyancy we rode the surface of the now silvering waters of the broad river. Our craft was about twenty-five feet long and two and a half broad, light, keel-less; and though easily capsized a racing craft in speed. More than once I came across one of these "dug-outs" in course of making. A suitable tree near the river edge is chosen, and cut down. This, and all the other work on it, is done by means of an axe, which the natives obtain either by bartering skins with the Russians, or, as at Pogobi, in part payment for boat made over to a gang of *brodyagi*. On

the stump of the tree left is placed a *tzakh*—that is, a twig with whittled shavings adhering to the top such as the Ainus call an *Inao*. This, like the cross (†) stuck in the ground beside a house in course of building by the Russians, is to keep away the evil spirits, the *daimones*, which here haunt the forest, and especially the swampy regions. The bark is chipped off, and very little hewing and trimming suffices on the outside, as will be seen from the illustration opposite p. 252. The hollowing process follows, and about one-third or one-fourth of the circumference of the log is cut into, the remaining two-thirds or three-quarters forming the outer surface of the boat. When duly hollowed to a thickness at the gunwale of about an inch, a cross-section will thus give about three-quarters of the circumference of a circle. The sides or lips of the boat leaning to each other are then stretched outwards, by means of sticks placed crosswise inside, so that the sides may become vertical, and the final form of a cross-section of the boat be that of the letter **U**.

All the work is performed with a couple of hatchets, though I once saw among the Orotchon tribe a primitive plane. A thin rim is affixed to the gunwale, and at the bow and stern, which are often exactly similar, are short flat projections used in punting. When dried and stretched, two or three rungs keep the sides rigid. The whole process takes, under favourable circumstances, one month, but in winter two.

In the management of them, their makers were as skilful as in their manufacture. They would stand at bow and stern of our frail craft, punting up stream, and not disturb its equilibrium one iota; albeit they were so careful, that if I leaned over in shooting a duck or firing at a seal, or shifted my position a trifle, to ease cramped limbs, Vanka's sharp eye would detect it, and I should be called back to the *status quo*.

The low limestone cliffs of the morning now gave way

to conglomerate resting on hardened argillaceous sandstone, which, though not attractive for the practical purpose of a bed for weary limbs, offered an excellent illustration of simple geological action—the draining off of rain-water through a pervious bed at the line of junction with the impervious. From a ledge of the latter, midway in the low cliff, it was pouring as a miniature waterfall into the river below. So simple, so small a matter here, those who have moved among the victims of the famines know how terribly important a feature it is in India. What thousands, millions, of lives would have been spared were it not so. Unfortunately for famine-stricken Central India, this pervious stratum, in its case the famous "Dekkan trap," is in parts 6000 and possibly 10,000 feet thick. To bore is useless, for it is impossible to pump from that depth. Rivers cannot form, and therefore irrigation is impracticable. Tanks or lakes are a last resource, but enormously expensive and scarcely satisfactory.

The yelping of sledge-dogs, and the smell from strings of fish drying in the sun, and just visible at the bend of the river, aroused us to the contemplation of another Gilyak village, if I may so dignify a collection of half a dozen huts with that name. Two unfinished canoes lay in their beds of fragrant chips; and beyond, on the "floor" of the village, were women cleaning fish preparatory to stringing it.

Huts of larch or pine planks, rectangular in shape, with obliquely sloping bark roofs, and doors about three feet high, a few similarly shaped but quite small erections on piles, for storing the winter provisions of dried fish, and three bear cages made up the village of Ukavo.

Nevertheless, Ukavo was at the time of my visit a rich, or at least a potentially rich, village. The basis of its affluence present, or to come, was even more assured than that of the new township in Australia which, possessing 400 inhabitants, a town hall, a telephone union, and a collection of galvanized-iron roofed cabins of unvarying

pattern, promised soon to throw Ballarat into the shade! No mines, gold or otherwise, entered into the Gilyaks' calculation, but they possessed a far more important asset in the shape of seven bears. Such a form of wealth, or rather capital, may require some explanation, even to an economist.

The object of the capture and feeding of the bear is the holding of a great yearly semi-religious festival, in which the slaughter of the beast plays the chief part. It is more probable, that in the older times a full-grown bear was captured just previous to the fête, and that to-day the letter rather than the spirit of the sacrifice is kept up by seizing cubs and rearing them for three or four years. The feeding is a matter of no difficulty, as will be seen when we come to the preparation of the Gilyak's winter stores. To the owner or capturer of the bear, the feast turns out a very profitable investment, for visitors from neighbouring villages flock in, and while necessaries are provided by the owner, luxuries are on sale, and bring him in a handsome profit.

The animals are kept in stout log cages, adorned with a pine-branch at each corner. Wishing to see, and if possible to photograph one of the occupants, I desired the villagers to bring one out, or at least unroof him. There were, however, too few men-folk at home, and the adult bears were very fierce, as indeed we gathered from their movements and remarks within; so two of the five little cubs were partially unroofed. The poor little orphans snarled, and shrank frightened into a corner, tumbling over one another, and trying in their terror to hide each beneath the other. Ere the month of January, 1905, is passed, or perhaps before, their spirits will have been released to carry messages to the great *Pal ni vookh*.

CHAPTER X

TO THE MOUTH OF THE TIM

"A departed spirit"—The big brown bear—Salmon for the spearing—Sun-dried fish—Eagle's wings to aid the flight of the soul of the murdered—We pass *brodyagi* encamped—I miss 5000 rubles—We join a bear in a seal hunt—A night in the swamps.

RESUMING our journey again, we were still casting about for a low, level, sandy bed, and the twilight was fast gathering, when my attention was called from the terrestrial to the supernatural. From out of the now dark and gloomy forest came a half moan, half cry.

It was uncanny beyond words. A cry from the unknown, a moan from the depths of undisturbed regions. Our Gilyaks ceased paddling, and we asked, "What is it? It must be some animal. Perhaps it is in the claws of a bear."

"*Kaukray! kaukray!** No! no! It is no animal. It is the shade of a dead man wandering in the forest."

For the Gilyaks not only believe in a future world, but their conceptions really connote immortality. The members of their race on the mainland, who live on the banks of the Amur, hold that the spirit of the departed one reaches after several days' journey a great village in the centre of the earth called *Mligh-vo*, where life is much the same as on earth, with this difference, that there the hunting and fishing are unstinted. In fact, it is the familiar

* A Gilyak word, meaning "no" or "nothing."

"happy hunting ground" of the Indian. A distinction is made between those who die a natural and a violent death, for the spirits of the murdered and suicides fly to heaven (*tlo*) direct, thus avoiding the long journey, and therefore not requiring food to be placed at their grave. How and in what *Mligh-vo* differs from *tlo* they cannot explain, but the differentiation marks their conception of the sacredness of the soul of the murdered or suicide.

The Gilyaks of Sakhalin, being descendants of pioneers who long ago left the "Old country," are more free-thinking than those of the elder clans on the Amur. Probably a closer intercourse and possibly intermarriages with the Ainus have also helped to modify their views. At any rate, one finds considerable divergence in practice from the old traditions, and many differences of custom and thought, not only between them and their Amur brethren, but between the Tim and Tro* Gilyaks and their brethren on the west coast of the island.

Vanka declared that the spirit of a good man went to the Great Spirit (to the East, where the sun rises), but that of a bad man into grass. Whether or not he was giving us the general conception of his tribe we could not make out. Some days later, in conversation with their *Cham*, or "medicine man," and some of the elders of the Tro Gilyaks, we were informed that "a good man's spirit goes into the ground into the middle of the earth (evidently to *Mligh-vo*); but a bad man's is disturbed, and drifts about like air round the huts of the village."

The spirits of the deceased occasionally hold communication with their earthly relations; for, endowed with supernatural capacities, they can in moments of dulness pay visits to their kindred, give them useful counsel and warn them against unknown troubles. If they desire to show

* The Tim Gilyaks are those living on the river Tim, while the Tro Gilyaks are settled at the mouth in the Bays of Ni, Nabil, and Chai.

themselves to any one they can ; but it is only given to man to see them in a state approaching death, *i.e.* in a dream. Talking on this subject to an old Gilyak, he said, "Spirits of the departed knock at the door sometimes. They come to warn us of some misfortune."

"But," I asked, "how are you to know that it is the spirit of the deceased that knocks?"

"Why, of course, you call, and if there is no answer you know that it is a departed spirit, and then you must throw out some food."

"Have you ever seen such?"

"No."

The Ainus of Yezo have a similar belief in the earthly visits of the departed ones. Among them, according to the Rev. J. Batchelor, the terrestrial and celestial inhabitants mutually appear as ghosts, but to their fellows as substantial.

The word ghosts is even too material a conception, for their presence cannot be detected by mortal sense. Only the dogs are able to apprehend their approach, and you may at once know of their proximity by the animals howling.

The reader will smile, but the Gilyak would say, let him only hear and he may be converted from his ignorant unbelief. My conversion took place at the village of Dagi, on the Okhotsk coast, where my interpreter and I lay awake one night in the hut of an Orotchon. Perhaps the fact that we were ill with ptomaine poisoning may have predisposed us to thoughts of *Mligh-vo*. Certain it is that at about 2 a.m. a low howl began, echoed and varied by thirty or forty other members of the canine race, a low peculiar cry of pain growing into a long drawn-out wail, rising and swelling until at last it ended in almost a scream. An unholy, ill-omened proceeding which surely nought earthly could account for!

But to return to the river and our Gilyak oarsmen, the

departed spirit on this occasion, with all due deference to their weighty traditions, was a snowy owl (*Syrnium uralense*).

If spirits were already abroad it was high time for material bodies to retire, and another consideration induced us to choose our camp. Master Bruin regarded these sandy shoals as his particular preserves, which was clear from the number of his footprints we had already seen. It must be about the time of his rising, probably he was at his toilet at the moment preparatory to his night's fishing, and it behoved us if we wished to avoid legal disputes to take possession at once. Beaching our canoe at a pleasant, clean, sandy shoal, dry from the recent fall of the river, Vanka leapt out to take the omens, in other words, to note if there were signs of *brodyagi* in the near neighbourhood.

Satisfied that there was nothing more than the footprints of Master Petz, who had been down to drink and fish during the previous night, we landed. The shoal was of considerable length, but narrowed to about twenty feet in depth by the willows, which formed here the van of the forest. Our natives ran into the *taiga* to cut down willow branches for our bed, and stakes for the tent and fire. The tent, which consisted of supports with a piece of canvas thrown over, was quickly erected and the fire lighted with marvellous despatch, we meanwhile unloading the canoe and spreading the rugs. One end of the open tabernacle, where our heads were to lie, was barricaded with our baggage, as we preferred, if Bruin's curiosity overcame his prudence, that he should be introduced to our feet first. These operations were not concluded without alarms and an occasional run for our guns, but neither bear nor *brodyagi* followed up the signals.

The brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), in whose habitat we found ourselves, attains to a great size in Sakhalin, in fact he gets bigger the further east one goes from European

Russia. In colour he varies from black to brown, but the latter is the more common form. Writers have differed as to the attitude he adopts towards man. Dr. Schrenck, writing of the Amur and Sakhalin bears, speaks of their "bös artiges Naturell;" while Mr. Sternberg, who was a political exile on Sakhalin for many years, has declared that they are "wenig aggressiver Natur und es ist nichts Ungewöhnliches, in nächster Nähe weidender Heerden oder im Walde Beeren suchender Weiber Meister Petz umher wandeln zu sehen, ohne dass er die Einen oder die Anderen behelligt oder auch nur in Schrecken setzt."

The truth appears to me to lie between these two statements. Should you come suddenly unawares upon the she bear with her young, a fatal blow from her paw or a final embrace will be yours. Even Mr. Sternberg admits that through hunger he "sometimes attacks the natives, and not seldom one of the latter is killed in the attack." On the other hand, it is true, that should Master Petz see you passing at some distance, and he be not in evil case, and you do not molest him, he may merely pursue his own course as even a satisfied lion or tiger will do. The *taiga* yields him abundance of berries, and the river quantities of fish, while—stolen fruits being sweet, even to bears—he will occasionally add to these a sable or hare caught in the snares of the Gilyaks.

The Caucasian farmer, whose agricultural success I have already chronicled, told us many a story of the adventures of himself and his neighbours with the bears which roamed in the primeval forest around his village of Uskovo. He had known no less than seven men attacked and mauled by bears, but, he added, "the bear is, after all, cowardly, for not one of the men was killed!"

The farmer and "dairyman" of Sakhalin still labours under difficulties from which his English representative has been for centuries immune. One of these seven men belonging to Uskovo was driving his cows to pasture, and

stopped on his way to make tea. Continuing again, he came suddenly upon his two cows lying dead, and standing over one of them, which he had already half devoured, was a big bear, defiant and angry at being disturbed. The man was so taken aback, that he stood rooted to the spot, though a gun was in his hand; but not so Bruin, who, leaving his prey with a growl of rage, fell upon the man, and before he could escape planted his great claws in his shoulder, making such holes that you could get several of your fingers into them.

Among the Gilyaks the *Ch'uff*, as they call the bear on Sakhalin, plays the greatest *rôle* in the animal world. He is regarded with peculiar sentiments, and the beliefs and ceremonies which cluster around his sacrifice are unique and interesting. The natives are fully aware of the *Ch'uff's* cunning, and regard him almost as a Gilyak, certainly as a competitor, and love to tell stories of his knowing ways. They describe how he will go a-fishing, by preference at night, but if by day, he will stand with his right paw held close to his breast lest the sun should cast a shadow on the water and frighten the fish; how he will get up on his hind-legs to fight, and parry a spear-thrust, or shield his heart from a shot, with his paw.

After all, Bruin is very human in many of his ways, and the brotherly feeling of the Russian peasant towards him is expressed in the pet names they give him—Mishka and Master Petz. On the mainland one not infrequently comes across the cubs kept as pets. I have seen them housed in a kennel in a yard, and even tied up to the side of a shanty by the wayside, where the bystander might be seen trying to give a friendly pat before receiving a less amicable return. The Caucasian farmer of Uskovo once caught three cubs and put them in a big box in his yard. One day one of them succeeded in making his escape by gnawing through the wood. The alarm was immediately raised by the wife of the farmer,

but the men of the village were in the fields. The fortunate cub, however, did not make off at once, but, seeing that his companions had not been able to follow him, went back to the box and literally "lent a hand just as a man would." Unfortunately number two was clumsy, or else too fat to squeeze through, and all his attempts were fruitless; yet number one did not relax his efforts until the cries of the men, now fast nearing the court-yard, warned him to be off. Curiously enough, the little animal, on emerging from the yard, immediately made straight to the spot where he had been captured, and then disappeared into the *taiga*.

As soon as our luxurious repast of boiled rice and cocoa was finished, the fire was allowed to die out, for, though a protection against prowling Master Bruin, it might prove an ally to more dangerous foes. By its light the *brodyagi* could have easily picked us off while remaining invisible themselves.

The night passed without incident, and, awaking before sunrise, I found Vanka already abroad and in the act of throwing a burning faggot into the water, exclaiming, with childish delight as it smoked and steamed, "There goes a steamer." He had come into contact with Russians more than, perhaps, any other Gilyak that I met, with one exception, and had probably made a visit to the west coast, where he would have seen a steamer. His cousin was no such traveller, and knew only a dozen or so Russian words. As Vanka was preparing to put off alone in the canoe, I asked him, "Are you going to catch fish?" There was no answer. I repeated my question.

"Hush! hush!" he said, "it is as *Tol ni vookh* wishes. You must not say that, or I may catch none." Which reminded one of friends nearer home, who check one in the act of congratulating one's self on an escape from misfortune, with a full belief in the sinister effects consequent on such foolhardy boastfulness.

The performance of our morning ablutions was to them a source of considerable interest and astonishment. They never went through such an extraordinary performance. What could be the object of such rites? What occult motive could induce the two white men to go through with such an unpleasant function at 5.30 a.m. on an autumn morning? Possibly the explanation was to be sought in ceremonial, or maybe we suffered from some foul disease!

Breakfast despatched, tent struck, and all the rolling up and stowing away of sacks, skins, etc., accomplished, an early start was made. The sun soon gained power, and a magnificently cloudless day smiled once more upon us. In vain we scanned the heavens for a cloud, and laughed in our sleeve in spite of *Tol ni vookh*, and statisticians or quoters of statistics, in far Europe, who should say that Sakhalin had only five days free from fog, cloud, or rain in the year. I had already seen five such days during the week I had spent on the island.

How glorious to be floating ever onward into the unknown. Virgin forest to right and left, and ever a fresh vista with each bend of the river. Now it was low-lying banks bordered with sallow and willow backed by tall grass, that hid alike the distant, high-reaching hills and the low-stealing fox. Then it was a lovely quest-enticing creek, the home of the otter and the bear, spanned by many a fallen trunk and many a bridge of branches, the pathways of sables and martens. To creep and wade up these was a veritable Arabian Nights venture, for what habitants of the forest might one not meet, to say nothing of the glorious sky-pictures seen through the interlacing branches overhead?

At the next bend sandy cliffs hove in view, loftier now, for we were approaching the defile of the eastern spur of mountains, which ends southwards in Cape Patience. Birches and firs were overhanging the edge, or fallen

headlong with their topmost branches touching the water. Driftwood, caught by overhanging bushes or bowing trees, or arrested by a grassy island in mid-stream, lay piled up as if by some giant hand.

Beside the tiny creeks a few tributaries were passed, but none of any importance. They bore names among the Gilyaks recording their value to the native hunter, *e.g. Kuvi*,* many sables river; *Kuni*, many fish and bears river; *Pilviskuri* and *Kondzhbung-gangi*, etc.

Buoyantly speeding over the bosom of the water under a glorious September sun, and wrapt as we were in contemplation of the scene, the needs of the flesh had to be remembered, especially with the fate of the previous party of the Russian prospector and his escort fresh in mind. It was most desirable to husband, if possible, our small stock of provisions against the return journey. Vanka, therefore, got out his long fish-spear (*marikh*), and, balancing himself on the prow of the boat, skilfully lunged at passing salmon. His weapon, which is one of a kind used by many of the tribes of North-Eastern Siberia, was of a peculiar character. To the shaft, which was about fourteen feet long, a large iron hook was loosely fastened by a thong. Close to the end was also another thong, bound round three or four times, but just loosely enough to allow of the hook being temporarily slid into it, the "business" end free and pointing with the shaft. Ready now for action, the weapon was like a magnified letter h. On sighting the gleam in the limpid depths beneath, the skilful harpooner gives a rapid thrust, and the belly of the salmon is pierced. The action of piercing looses the hook from the threefold thong, and the struggles of the fish now only serve the hook, which is dangling from the first thong, to gain a firmer grip.

The first lunge by Vanka proved unsuccessful, as a cry of "*Kaukray*" announced; again a silvery gleam, and

* *i* in the Gilyak tongue means river, as *vo* village.

a second attempt had happier results, for a *kita* of fifteen to twenty pounds was hauled in, splashing and somersaulting. A blow on its head, and the fish lay dead; whereupon our Gilyaks whipped out their knives, and, like the Red Queen in "Alice in Wonderland," "offed with its head," and with teeth and knife devoured their tasty morsel raw, leaving nothing but the jaws. The natives regard the head of a salmon as a great delicacy, especially the cartilaginous parts, and in this they can claim kinship with the bear, for during the spawning-season Master Petz will come down to the river's edge, and in one night spoil a score of *kita*, devouring the heads, and throwing away the bodies. We preferred to keep up some of the habits of the civilization we had left behind, and waited until midday should give us pause to camp, and cook our share of the catch.

Meanwhile, another village, Auk-vun-wauk by name, hove in sight, and, paddling in, we stepped gingerly from our unstable craft. Vanka insisted on accompanying me because of the crowd of yelping dogs, although the most savage were tied up to a pole underneath a hut built on piles. These animals are fierce towards strangers, and especially white men, although I believe it is on the whole true the world over, that, if you show no sign of fear, dogs may yelp and growl, but will stop short of actual attack. My present position reminded me of an incident in Southern China—a sahib obliged to appeal to a piccaninny for protection from a buffalo, whose discrimination between the white man and the yellow is well known.

These dogs are used by natives in hunting bears and in tracking *brodyagi*. In winter, harnessed to the sledges, they are not fed until the end of the journey, and are then much more dangerous to encounter. A scarcely less unpleasant experience than unexpectedly meeting a team of these hungry, savage creatures in winter, befell a

traveller who, driving his own team, came upon a bear stirred by hunger to a premature sortie from his winter quarters. The dogs, spying him, and urged by instincts of the chase, swerved aside, and dashed between the trees after the beast. The luckless traveller clutched at the sides of the light sledge, hanging on as long as possible, instead of throwing himself off before he was tumbled out gunless in front of the bear.

Striding through the crowd of yelping animals, we came upon an old Gilyak and his wife, who sat slicing and cleaning *kita*. With a long rakish knife, which is the men's hunting and "general-purposes" knife (*dzhakho*), the fish was split open, and with a short-bladed and curved edition of the former—the woman's fish and domestic knife (*ungu dzhakho*)—the *kita* was cleaned. Two slices were then cut from each side, leaving for remainder the head and tail and backbone, with some flesh adhering.

All these were then hung up to dry in the sun, this drying-ground being the "village green," or "market-place," of the Gilyaks. The slices were for human consumption, and woe betide the Gilyaks if August (O.S.), which is the chief season of fish-drying, prove a rainy month, for then only a small quantity of their staple food will be prepared against the winter, and stores will give out early, and many will die of starvation. Fortunately, sunny weather

had this year attended their efforts, and goodly quantities of sun-dried fish were hanging in rows upon rows, to be eventually consigned to those strange-looking coffin erections, consisting of a short log hollowed out and perched on forked stakes. These stakes were, in "well-regulated establishments," encircled with pieces of bark, umbrella-shaped, to prevent the ravages of rats and other vermin.

The roe is regarded as a great delicacy, and was being scraped into interesting looking wooden vessels resembling a butcher's tray, which also serve to receive the blood from the slain bear at the great festival. On feast-days, such as at the beginning of the sable and seal hunts, which inaugurate a New Year (the Gilyaks having two years to our one), the roe is mixed and pounded with whortleberries, etc., and made into a much appreciated mess. The tail and head-pieces of the *kita* are intended for the dogs and the bear, and the former came in for a few bits of fresh fish as perquisites while the operations were going on before us, though for the most part they feed themselves in summer. Some of them were at the moment engaged in catching fish at the river's edge, one or two less particular than the others seizing a dead fish cast up on the shoals.

We did no bartering here, Vanka having landed to beg or borrow some seal-oil, for apparently his stock of that great Gilyak delicacy, and (to us) horrible-smelling *impedimentum*, had run out. Our next stop was for the midday meal at a bank opposite a fine sandy cliff, crowned with larch-trees. Stepping out of the canoe, I espied some fresh footprints of Master Bruin, which our natives, with a discrimination remarkable to our untrained eyes, declared were those of a *Ch'uff* that we had disturbed fishing at the moment. Examining the tracks more closely, I was sorely tempted to spare one of my fast diminishing photograph films. The impression of the balls of the toes and the five claws in the sand was perfect, and to complete

GILYAK STOREHOUSES FOR DRIED FISH. [*To face page* 174.

all were the marks made by his claws as he slid involuntarily into the water.

Clambering up the bank, I found Vanka and Armunka had the slices of the salmon already grilling in front of a fire. Running into the forest, they had deftly cut and prepared two willow twigs, stripping off the leaves, and slitting them lengthwise. In each of these was inserted a slice of fish, extended by two cross-pieces, the slit-ends at the same time being bound up with the green rind. But it must be confessed that, though I admired their rapid methods in the culinary department, I had scarcely the same respect for our Gilyaks' other domestic ways. They occasionally *assisted* at washing up, but we thought it high time to reduce their share of it to the French interpretation of that word, when our spoons were "finished" off on their mocassins, on which they wiped their fishy and clayey hands.

In the course of the afternoon we came to yet another Gilyak settlement, the last in fact before we reached the mouth of the river, some hundred miles distant. Here we were hailed in the Gilyak tongue.

"Have the *Lo-cha* (Russians) any 'brick tea'?"

"Yes. Have you any seal-skins?"

Stepping ashore, haggling began, and finally a seal-skin was obtained for a brick of tea,* some shot, and caps. These seal-skins were not from the fur seals (*Callorhinus ursinus*), but from the common hair seal (*Phoca vitulina*), and in some cases the banded seal (*Histriophoca fusciata*). The fur seal has a thick, downy under-fur, which is what we are familiar with in caps and jackets after the longer and sparser hairs have been pulled out, a treatment more commonly known in connection with beaver skins. The hair seal has a bristly, silverish, straw-coloured skin, with dark-grey or black spots, and is commonly used on the

* Weighing one kilogramme, and costing us at Alexandrovsk half a ruble, or, say, 5*d*. per lb.

Continent for children's satchels. The fur seal is now very rare on Sakhalin, though in earlier years large numbers used to be caught off Robben Island, now known by its Russian name of *Ostrova Tyuleniy*, or Seal Island, and lying a little to the south of Cape Patience. The latter are quite common, and we met several ascending the river after the salmon. The great hunting-season is, however, the spring, and this begins the new or summer year among the Gilyaks.

Again continuing our route, it was interesting to observe that the cliffs were recurring much more frequently on the right bank than on the left of this northerly flowing river, which adds one more to the illustrations of Ferrel's law of the more rapid erosion of the right banks of rivers in the northern hemisphere, due to the rotation of the earth. The effect of this deflexion of the water is, of course, greater in these high latitudes than in low.

Wild swans occasionally flew across high overhead, and a woodpecker could be heard tap-tapping the trees. Our natives eagerly asked us to shoot the eagles which soared aloft or settled on the top of a high tree, only to fly away as we approached within gunshot. These were the white-tailed eagles (*Haliëtus albicillus*), prized by the natives for their tail-feathers, for which they declared the Chinese gave them three dollars (about 6*s*.). The Japanese (in Yezo) are said to use them to indicate the residence of a person of importance by placing them over his door; in any case, the Gilyaks themselves value the feathers, which they use for arrow-heads. The wings are also prized by them, being placed at the grave of a Gilyak who has been murdered or has committed suicide, to aid his soul in its flight to heaven.

Having left all habitations behind us, even the last of these "children of the forest," the scenery grew ever wilder. The footprints of the bears increased; already we had seen, since the morning, between thirty and forty. Once

or twice we passed a rude raft composed of a few pine-logs, roughly bound together, telling of *brodyagi* who were attempting to steal down the river by night; or a few ashes on a shoal indicating their temporary camping-place; but that afternoon we were to come to still closer quarters with them. At about half-past five we were keeping a look-out for a likely halting-place, when a thin column of smoke, just appearing above the trees on our right bank, warned us to be on the alert. Word was passed in a whisper to have guns ready, and, our natives paddling silently but quickly, we shot by unobserved—at least, we trusted so. The *brodyagi* had built their fire behind some willows a few feet from the bank, which screened their merrily crackling fire, but not the smoke, from our view.

That evening we camped lower down the river, separated from our unpleasant neighbours by about two miles; but we spent by no means an undisturbed night. The fire had been put out, and we had rolled ourselves up in rugs and placed our guns loaded by our sides, and revolvers under our improvised pillows; scarcely ten minutes had elapsed when the alarm was given by my interpreter. Sitting up, I listened; but no sound was to be heard, and we lay down again. Once more I was roused, and this time I seized my gun and listened outside. Was it a bear? No; he thought he had heard the sound of a paddle above the bend there—probably the *brodyagi* whom we had passed. Our natives asked us to fire our revolvers. If it were bears they would be sufficiently scared, and if it were outlaws they would know we were on the *qui vive*. This we did; but I was impatient of continued alarms, and decided to go on watch for half the night. Slipping on a *shuba*, or rather *dokha*,* I planted myself, gun in hand, outside the tent. If the reader has been in a similar

* A long coat reaching to the feet, lined with fur inside and outside, and especially suitable for sledging.

position, he will realize the eeriness of the situation. A pitch darkness enveloped everything, for it wanted but two or three days to the new moon, and the heavens were overcast with clouds which descended later in rain. Peering first in the direction of the forest, was that the sparkle of two glassy eyes I saw? and, straining my ears towards the river, did I hear the light plash of an oar? After an interval of reassuring silence, a strange sound would once more quicken my senses—the splash of a salmon or the far-off cry of a wild swan disturbed by some prowling beast. A light drizzle began and forced me to cover my rifle. At length the three hours (or was it three days?) came to an end, and my companion relieved me.

The dawn waked our natives, and the morning opened with sunshine after the night's showers. Our method of propulsion was altered this morning. We had got beyond the region of rapids, and were now on a full flowing river. A pair of native sculls, with a hole bored in the flat bulging part below the haft, were brought to light from the bottom of the boat. A minute or two sufficed to make rowlocks, from forked branches cut and trimmed and bound to the gunwale with seal thongs. Vanka used these sculls at the bow, rowing (not sculling) with them *one after the other*, while Armunka steered with a paddle in the stern. Bear footprints continued to be as common as on the previous day, our oarsmen delighting to point them out to me, at the same time making amusing attempts to mouth the English word "bear"—attempts which resulted in *ba, b'a, baa*, and finally *bar*. With their intimate knowledge of Bruin, they would tell us that this one, whose footprints we saw, was here yesterday, that early this morning, and that, again, we had just disturbed.

To the wild geese, ducks, swans, crows, and snipe of the swamps and the river was added to-day another inhabitant —the seal. A log—a great snag—lay in midstream a

MAP BY D'ANVILLE, 1737. BY THE "ISLE DU FL(EUVE) NOIR," IS MEANT SAKHALIN.

[*To face page* 98.

couple of hundred yards ahead, where the river swept round a sandy beach. Vanka began to load up, and I wondered what was now in progress. Drifting silently on, I could just make out a sleeping, almost shapeless, mass lying upon the log. At that distance it was impossible to distinguish the head from the tail. A loud report from Vanka's and my companion's rifles—for they had fired together—a plash, and their prey had escaped They had missed, which was not surprising considering the instability of the canoe.

The meeting with yet another denizen of these parts that day has been a source of congratulation and commiseration on the part of my friends ever since—congratulation that I was allowed to see it, and commiseration that I did not shoot it. We had arrived at a part of the river where the banks, rising about ten feet above the water, were covered, as was the adjoining land, with tall rushes and long grass about six feet in height. Gazing carelessly at the bank, I espied a head peeping out of the long grass, and called to my interpreter and the natives in a low voice, "*Malenkiy medvyet!*" (A little bear!). Seeing nothing, they smiled; but on my reiterating and pointing, Vanka caught sight of it, and called to me, "*Nyet stryelyay! Gilyakskiy sabaka*" (Don't shoot; it is a Gilyak dog). Now, occasionally we had seen a native dog sitting alone at a distance from a village, fishing or waiting for his master, and we therefore hesitated; but before we had realized the mistake the animal had got up and trotted off, disappearing into the tall rushes and grass, giving us, however, one clear view of a beautiful coal-black fox with a white tip to his great brush. Even as he disappeared, Vanka was calling to us, "*Nyet stryelyay! Nyet stryelyay! Pal ni vookh budet serditiy*" (Don't shoot! Don't shoot! The god of the mountains will be angry), and much more as to the fate the lord of this region would have in store for us should we cross his will. I

went ashore, but it was hopeless to expect to come up with the animal.

According to Vanka, if we had killed it, its brethren would have been informed, and when we set out for the winter's hunt they would have banded together to kill us. If Vanka was really sincere, I think it far more likely that he feared lest his winter's hunt should suffer, because, by killing thus in a haphazard fashion, it had not been inaugurated with the usual ceremonies. To seize of the provision of the great Pal ni vookh (he is lord of the forest and all therein) before acknowledging in due form his sovereignty and bounty, was to risk bringing down his wrath upon our heads. But yet I have strong doubts as to Vanka's sincerity. He was very faithful to us, yet the possibility of getting 200 rubles in the next few months was a consideration which few Gilyaks or Russians would have hesitated to risk by truth-telling. We taxed him afterwards with this, but he still stood to his guns.

Many weeks later, when at Vladivostok, Mr. S., a partner in an English firm who have large dealings in furs, told me that the last skin of this description had sold for 5000 rubles (£536). Several varieties of foxes, including the common species, the red, the silver-black, and the black, are found on the island. All are larger than their English brother, and possess very fine brushes.

For some time we had been keeping a look-out in vain for a sandy reach whereon to camp. They had grown scarcer, the river being more constant here, and the banks being low and grassy. Our custom was to stop while there was light enough to plunge into the forest, cut our tent-stakes and fuel, and get our shelter up. But on this occasion the stars began to peep, the banks to grow dim and indistinct, and the trees to loom black and threatening before we sighted a big, curved, sandy beach. We hailed it with delight, for how infinitely preferable a bed it

makes to a hummocky clearing in a forest. And in the morning, in tramping round, one appreciates the dry, hard sand instead of the wet grass and the weakly penetrating sun-rays obscured by interlacing thickets. But even as we were about to reach the boat an angry growling and snarling were heard. Had it been daytime, here had been our chance for a hunt, but even the natives do not attempt a night attack. We had camped before on Bruin's private preserves, but never when he was in actual possession. Quietly our natives paddled round the curving reach, the growling and snarling growing louder and louder. They suggested the high grassy bank on the right as an alternative camping-ground, but I was too enamoured of a sandy bed to acquiesce, so they paddled on, the oars being discarded for the occasion. Then preparations were made for action. The double-barrelled gun was passed forward to Armunka, a redoubtable hunter, as we learnt afterwards. He loaded, and knelt in the boat, rifle in hand; I did likewise, wondering "what was to do next," as my interpreter said, in copying us. The noises had now assumed a different note, a most weird mixture of growl and howl and wail, at times a half-human cry, quite unlike a bear's. The darkness thickened; we could but dimly descry the nearer bank. Suddenly Armunka rose to full height in the prow, took aim into the darkness, I watching and wondering, for I could perceive nought. Then arose a shriek, followed by a great plunge. I could dimly make out a rising column of water, and immediately we were swept along with a rush by the swift and rapid strokes of the two paddles, in hot pursuit of a pair of seals! The snarling and growling had proceeded from the bear, who, in unconscious co-operation with us, was pursuing the seals as they emitted their strange amatory cries. As we neared the latter, Bruin had ceased to growl, though just before Armunka fired I had caught the cry of wild swans disturbed by the bear,

and his plash—plash—plash as he prowled along the left bank.

Another camping-ground was found a mile or two further on, where we spent the night unmolested, though not without alarms. The clouds had been gathering since the previous night, and the following morning opened wet. Despite all our efforts to cover our baggage and ourselves, a couple of hours in an open canoe in pouring rain left us wet and sitting in water. If it had been delightful beyond words to float on the bosom of the broad river into the unknown, with a clear sky and brilliant sun, it was most miserable and wretched to sit stiff and wet in the bottom of a canoe with no hope of shelter but the forest, with its dank grass underfoot and tree-droppings overhead. However, we held on our way until midday, when we disembarked, and dragging our baggage up the bank, scattered it on the wet grass, for there was not a dry spot to be found. This done, our natives at length accomplished the apparently impossible, and coaxed a fire to light. While we were yet stamping around, cold and stiff, trying to rejoice in the potentialities of a fire, a slight noise was heard from the river. It was forty-eight hours since we had seen any human being, and, picking up our guns, we ran to the edge of the bank, to find a canoe, well-laden, and manned by two Gilyaks, shoot under the bank. This was followed by two more, containing some Kazaks, Mr. S., the Chief of the Timovsk District, and Mr. von Friken, the Inspector of Forests and Agriculture from Alexandrovsk.

Explanations had to be made by my interpreter, as I was in the position of a *brodyaga* discovered by the *nachalnik* in his own *okrug* without a passport. We had heard from the natives of their journey, and it appeared that they had, for the first time in their long abode on the island, decided to descend the Tim to make personal acquaintanceship with the district in their charge,

and to visit the engineers who were at the recently discovered petroleum lake. They were very polite, and shared with us a wild goose shot by one of the soldiers. Mr. von Friken was especially friendly, and, speaking in French, he gave me the benefit of his observations of the tribes of the island, having, in the course of his duties, *parcouru* over a large portion of South Sakhalin. Stationed for several years at Korsakovsk, he had moved recently to Alexandrovsk, where he politely invited me to call upon him, as did also the Chief, at his residence at Rikovsk. Mr. von F., I found educated, friendly, and courteous, and an exception among the Sakhalin officials; in fact, his office was a special one, partaking rather of the nature of a scientific than an administrative one. With military despatch their retinue repacked, and our new acquaintances, with a "*Da svidaniya*," were gone.

It was still raining steadily, but we now felt ready for a fresh start, and embarked without delay to continue the descent of the river. The Tim was getting broader, averaging now about 300 or 400 feet in width, the sandy reaches had disappeared, and the level of the land was growing lower and the forest more broken. With the diminution of timber, bears and their tracks began to disappear also. That evening we were compelled to camp in a thicket, a performance no less uncomfortable than our midday halt.

On one advantage we congratulated ourselves, viz., our natives were more than usually tractable. Once or twice there had been slight friction, but an incident had occurred, unknown to me, which had settled all that. It appears that my nationality had puzzled them. They knew the Russians, but this stranger spoke another language. Possibly this racial difference accounted for my proclivity for washing; but, anyhow, what was I? I travelled with much baggage and many stores. Was I a great prince among my own people? "Yes!" was the unblushing

answer of my interpreter. Henceforth all our difficulties were at an end, at least as far as Vanka was concerned. After that the request became quite familiar, "Would the princes give some gunpowder?"

The night was an uncomfortably wet one, and the next morning we looked forward to ending our river journey and reaching a native village in the bay, where we could get shelter from the elements and dry our now sodden baggage. Our natives reported that it was but half a day's journey to the mouth; but they had reckoned without the wind. A storm swept up the river from the Okhotsk Sea, and it was madness to attempt to ride the bay when our canoe even shipped water in the river. Loth as we were to camp in this dreary, shelterless spot, it must be done. No forest was here—that had been left behind—nothing but low-lying swamp, the *tundra* of the north. Cold, wet, and hungry, we scrambled ashore, found a piece of firm ground—an island in the midst of marshes—stamped down the long wet grass, and proceeded to search for fuel. Some rotting driftwood rewarded our hunt, and, happily, a log left by a flood gave us a little shelter from the wind, which swept in from the sea.

With the bears had gone also the wild ducks, and our larder had not been replenished for two days. Armunka was therefore sent over to the right bank to shoot, if possible, some form of flesh. It was of no use to fire at an occasional flock of wild geese, for our quarry was nearly certain to fall in un-get-at-able swamps. Fortunately, Armunka was more successful, and brought back a solitary wild duck, which, however, shrank remarkably in the roasting, at least in the opinion of two hungry men.

In vain, before retiring, we tried to dry our sodden rugs, only succeeding, beyond our best hopes, in filling our eyes with smoke. The sun went down in a wild sky amid clouds of angry red; the distant roar of the wild

breakers of the Okhotsk Sea boomed in our ears, bringing no sense of peace, nought but a feeling of cold and storm. Crouched under our open shelter, we slept between the intervals of trying to avoid the tricklings of rain through our canvas roof.

CHAPTER XI

IN THE BAY OF NI

A curious coast-line—Gilyak huts and their origin—An interior—"Give something to the god"—The great bear fête—A unique band and artiste—The Cham's adjuration—The bear not a pious Gilyak—Signification of the festival.

IT was yet dark, 3.30 a.m., when I heard noises proceeding from Vanka. *He* declared that he was singing. It was not an occasion on which to discuss the point, or to state the laws of harmony as understood in the West, so I kept silence; and, feeling most uncomfortably wet from rain-drippings, lay still and watched his preparations for a fire. This done, he directed his superfluous energy upon us, urging the necessity of starting early, before the wind, awaking with the sun, roused the waves in the bay to action. So we "stood up," as my interpreter rather literally translated the Russian word, which, however, accurately described our morning toilet.

A frugal breakfast by the light of a fire, a hurried packing of wet baggage, and we were slipping down the last league of our river journey. At the mouth is a delta, but our oarsmen knew the river "as their five fingers," and piloted us unerringly by the deep channel to the Bay of Ni, into which the river Tim empties. This bay and the whole coast-line for many miles are of such curious formation that a word or two of description will be necessary to render clear my further journeyings.

Reference was casually made in Chapter VI., in dwelling

on the geological aspect of the island, to its gradual emergence in current geological time. This is the central fact which explains the formation of the lagoon-studded coast in the north-east and south-west of the island.

On our left, as we entered the bay travelling northward, was a low-lying swampy shore—*tundra*, as it is called in Siberia ; and on our right stretched a sand dune, varying in width from a few yards to a verst or more, and keeping parallel with the coast-line. This formation extended northwards for 100 miles or more, for no white man had penetrated beyond about 80 miles, and the natives could only retail hearsay concerning the "beyond." From the mouth of the Tim, the Bay of Ni extended for about 20 miles northward, then narrowed to a passage-way, which opened out into the Bay of Chai, beyond which no names had been given to the yet unexplored bays. This wall of protecting sand-dune was pierced by three narrow straits, giving access to the sea, in the course of the 80 miles.

The coast-line on our left represented the prehistoric shore, and the terrace above it the original sea-level. The sand-dunes, due to deposition by the alluvium-laden waters of the Tim flowing north, checked by the Okhotsk cold current flowing south, had found their way above the surface of the water in the course of the gradual emergence of the island already referred to. From that time seeds carried by wind or bird had been deposited, and the growth of coarse grass, Swiss pine (*Pinus cembra pumila*), and even wild rose (*Rosa rugosa*) had helped to bind the sand and establish these long sandy islets.

From the delta of the Tim we made across the bay in a north-easterly direction to a cluster of huts on the inner side of the dune. The wind was already making itself felt ; our light craft rocked, and the morning air struck cold on our damp clothes. The villages of Nivo

(the first, for there are two) and Kamavo, with their bear-cages adorned with pine branches, stood out prominently on the sandy level, and a crowd of dogs, barking and splashing, stopped their fishing to show resentment at the appearance of strangers. A verst or two beyond Kamavo our boat was beached, where stood a tent, and as we waded ashore we were accosted by two or three Kazaks, who led us into the presence of a Russian police officer.

It was a strange, out-of-the-way place to be stationed at, and only exceptional circumstances accounted for his practical banishment to this far-away spot. Japanese schooners, of the adventuring junk class, from the island of Yezo, had been wont to come up here to the mouth of the Tim to barter rice, kettles and cauldrons, rifles, ear-rings, etc., for furs, and to fish and salt salmon during the spawning season. This had been going on here certainly since 1868, when a scramble was made by Japanese and Russians for unoccupied spots, and probably from long before that, but this year a Russian vessel or vessels had been expected to visit the bay, and for fear of any disturbance, or connivance with escaped convicts, this officer had been despatched hither in July. It was now September ; no Russian vessel had appeared, and he was preparing to end his exile and take his departure in a couple of days.

Delighted to meet arrivals from the outer world, he overloaded us with hospitality, drew for us a rough chart of the bay, and eagerly devoured our news. From him we heard more details of the story of the ex-captain and *brodyaga*, whose untimely death the officer was sincerely sorry for. He had found him pleasant company when under his charge, and had allowed him his freedom on parole. He surmised that there had been bad blood between their captive and the soldiers. So far as I had observed, the treatment of the convicts by the soldiers

on the way out to Sakhalin was friendly, but the desperate criminals and their general surroundings on the island naturally harden them against all and sundry. A man lagging behind in doing his hard-labour duty of dragging logs, through weakness or illness, will get the butt end of a rifle in his back ; and it is scarcely surprising, so far away from the central administration, and in view of the difficulty of distinguishing between shams and genuine cases of illness. The time was when matters were infinitely worse, when there was but one doctor on the island, and brutal soldiers had the opportunity to lord it over poor prisoners in their charge, to vent their spite on them, and to kill, under the guise of correction, and report under the head of accident.

We were squatted within the narrow compass of the tent when the Japanese agent, who looked after the storing of the fish preparatory to its lading, appeared, and we were invited to visit the two schooners. Rowing out to one of them, we clambered over the taffrail, strode into the little low cabin, and, after due salutations of "*O hayo!*" (Honourably early !), leaned our rifles against the side, and sank cross-legged on the matted floor. Over our glasses of tea *à la Russe*, we made the proposal that they should take us down south ; for the prospect of their early departure had opened to us the possibility of either visiting the Orochons and Gilyaks around Nabil Bay, a short day's sail south, where we hoped to find some means of ascending the Nabil river, and thence by native guidance to reach Derbensk ; or of sailing to the southern portion of the island, to the Bay of Patience, and visiting the Ainus. This was a sudden alteration in our plans, but, in regions where means of communication and transport are so uncertain, a by no means unusual occurrence. The Japanese captain, however, objected that he had his orders to return direct ; moreover, the weather was fickle, and he could not tell how many days might elapse before he could land us.

Eventually the uncertainty, and the possibility of my missing communication with the mainland later, added to the risk of being stranded on the Nabil river, without means of transport, and with insufficient food, determined us to give up the idea, and adhere to our first plan, and proceed northwards.

For this journey it was necessary to have a larger canoe, and a crew who knew the coast-line and, if possible, were known to the natives, for the bays were occupied not only by the Gilyaks, but also by another tribe, called by the Russians Orochons. While preparations were going forward, we strolled to the nearest Gilyak village of Kamavo. How welcome was the sun now! Warmed within by a good meal, and our clothes dried, it was new life to run or bask on the sand in the warm noonday sun. I made a dash across the quarter-mile of sand-dune to get a glimpse of the great breakers, which had not ceased their booming throughout the wild, drear night. They were still thundering in, but how gloriously now in the brilliant sunshine. These were the waters of the vast Pacific, though after sweeping through the slight crescent barrier of the Kurile islands one chose to call them the Okhotsk Sea. To the east, 500 miles distant, stretched down the peninsula of Kamchatka, that acme of cold to the English schoolboy.

Turning back again to the bay, and reaching the village of Kamavo, I entered one of the Gilyak huts. The Gilyaks boast of two kinds of huts, destined the one for summer and called *tolf tuf*, and the other for winter residence named *torif*. The extremes of climate, and contact with their neighbours have led to the adoption of dual dwellings, but until recent times, probably as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century on the mainland, and later on the island, the winter hut was their only style of dwelling.

Protection against the wind and cold being the chief requisites of a winter abode, a site is chosen in the forest,

which has the added advantage of being handy for the winter's hunting. A quadrangular pit is dug to the depth of about three feet. At the corners of a smaller quadrangle within this pit are erected four stout poles, which are united at the tops by four other poles. This forms the main framework of the hut. From the level ground, *i.e.* three feet above the floor of the hut, smaller poles, generally of larch, are rested against the framework all round, thus forming a tent-shaped erection with its conical top cut off. The whole of the structure is covered up with the earth dug out of the pit, saving only a hole in the top for chimney. A covered entrance or tunnel, likewise composed of timber supports covered in with earth, forms the approach to the dwelling. This is on the level ground, and the stranger having penetrated it, finds the end blocked, but slipping aside a sliding door, or, more accurately, a panel, a little earthen stairway is revealed, by which he descends to the floor of the hut.

It will be seen from this that the winter huts, when covered with snow and lit up by a blazing fire inside, are very cosy. Dr. Schrenck and Mr. Sternberg have surmised from this pattern of hut, and from the survival of a custom in the bear festival indicating that their entrance and exit was originally only by the chimney, that the Gilyaks' ancestors came from the North. The words used for entering and leaving the hut, *kusind* and *jigind*, implying to sink and to emerge, also witness to the use of the chimney as entrance and exit. Such authorities are not lightly to be differed from, but it should be remembered that pit-dwellings of this kind have been used over wide areas by differing peoples, whose northern origin has not been attested, *e.g.* in Yezo, the Primorsk, and Manchuria, to mention only the surrounding regions; and what is also important in this connexion, the early inhabitants of Manchuria, the Yĭh-len, are described in the Chinese annals of the After Han dynasty (A.D. 25–219) as

"Troglodytes living in caves, their rank marked by the depth of their dwellings, the most honourable having a descent of nine steps," and (later chronicles) the "entrance being at the summit."

Whatever may have been the origin of the winter hut, it is fairly certain that the Gilyak summer dwelling is traceable to Northern China through Manchuria. It is easy to see how it would have appealed to the Gilyak. The melting snow in spring renders his winter hut damp and wet, and the increasing heat of the sun makes it stuffy and hot.

The possession of two houses for the different seasons is also found to be an advantage from the point of view of their occupations. In winter it is convenient to be in the forest to pursue the hunting of the bear, fox, etc., while in the summer fishing points to the river bank or sea-coast as the most handy. In shape the summer hut resembles a rudely constructed Swiss châlet. Some were built on piles, but these were few, and this was apparently a doomed fashion. The one which we now entered, in Kamavo, was not large—about 16 feet long and 13 feet wide; the side timbers rose to a height of about 4 feet 6 inches, and from these sprang the obliquely sloping roof of poles for rafters, and slips of bark for tiles. Stooping low, we advanced to the 3 feet doorway, cautiously assuming a half-erect position, and unsuccessfully attempting to avoid knocking our heads. Accustoming our eyes to the darkness, for there was but a hole in the roof for window and chimney, we made out in the centre a large earth and ash box, 4 feet long and 2½ feet broad, on the smouldering logs of which was a kettle, and from a rafter above depended a cauldron. Around the two sides and further end of the hut ran a rude bench or daïs (*nakh*), 15 inches from the ground and about 4 feet in width, leaving a narrow gangway between it and the fire (*tur*). On the *nakh* were seated several Gilyaks, a mother with a baby, a girl smoking, and three or four men. Above hung a *mêlée* of articles, from

GILYAK SUMMER HUT. [*To face page* 192.

a baby's cradle to a rude axe for hewing out canoes. The cradle, of wood, shaped like a scoop without the handle, was strung to a cross-pole by thongs of seal-hide. On the bench and hanging above were fishing-nets, birch-bark bowls for water or seal-oil (p. 203), dried fish-skins, dog-skins, winter clothes, seal-oil in seal's stomachs, etc. Perhaps the state of the atmosphere is best left to the reader's imagination. Having photographed the interior, though with but poor result, owing to the prevailing darkness, I turned my attention to two or three "works of art." Two small flat pieces of wood cut into the forms of a disc and a crescent hung from a beam. These represented the sun and the moon, and were used as charms. There were also two sticks, with shavings on, similar to the one I have described as protecting the canoe during its construction from evil spirits; but these particular ones, I learnt, were for placing over a sick child, and would ensure its recovery.

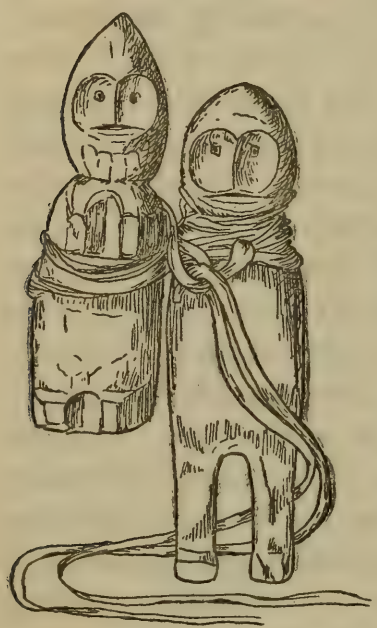
But no signs of worship were there, no graven images, for the great "Kiskh" is invisible to mortal eyes. Charms there are, though with the decline of the *cham's* influence and the contact with Russians these are losing their value in the eyes of the Gilyaks, and they laugh when questioned about them by the foreigner, yet not without a lurking sense of fear at the bottom of their hearts.

Later on we shall see that the *cham*, or medicine-man, exorcises spirits which take up a temporary abode in charms made in the shape of a human being. Otherwise even this anthropoid kind was used as an amulet. A pair of these, carved from wood, which I have (p. 194), are intended to be worn on the limb or part of the body affected; for a sore throat, for instance, the little figures would be tied round the neck.

Only on one occasion did I hear of anything approaching what is vaguely termed "idol-worship."

It was told me by the ex-overseer at Derbensk, whose duties in the previous years had taken him down the

river Tim. On one of his journeyings a severe snowstorm drove him to seek refuge at a Gilyak village where he was a stranger. As he was sitting down in the headman's hut, and about to make a meal, the Gilyaks said, "Give something to the god (lord)." The overseer therefore placed some little cakes in the birch basket hanging in a corner before a wooden figure, such as I have described, which had its hands crossed on its breast and wore a belt. On the morrow the Russian observed that the basket was empty, the cakes had vanished. In the evening, therefore, he made offering of more, and lay down pretending to sleep. Keeping careful but unsuspected watch, he saw a Gilyak come forward and take the cakes and eat them; so he called out, "What are you doing? Let the god eat them!" Whereupon the Gilyak, as may be imagined, was highly offended.



As a rule, offerings were made in the open air, always on deserting our camp-fires, and left for the consumption of the deity. Not only were they the god's due, but the fulfilment of the rite brought good luck, and the omission ill-luck. All misfortunes are attributed to the anger of the god. If the Gilyak is unconscious of guilt, then it must have been some of his kindred who provoked the god to righteous anger; perhaps it was his wife, who had failed to guard the honour due to the hearth by allowing somebody to spit upon it, or to leave the hut with his pipe lighted from the sacred fire.

Dr. Laufer, a member of the recent Jesup Expedition, despatched from Washington, U.S.A., and the greatest

authority on the art of the Amur tribes, has declared of the Gilyaks and Golds that their art is lacking in realistic representations. Their purely decorative work—and he excludes from this all wooden objects, animals, etc., carved as charms or toys—he alleges, is confined to copies of Chinese representations of animals which these natives have never seen, such, for instance, as the cock, the tortoise, and the mythical phœnix. It is interesting in this connexion to note that in this particular hut in the village of Kamavo, I found several carvings on the timbers of the wall of the hut of bears, as well as other crude mural

decorations of a chess-board pattern. Perhaps these may be regarded as the exception which proves the rule.

Emerging from the hut into a crowd of yelping dogs, we were attracted by the bear-cage. In front hung a birch-bark basket, as seen in the illustration (opposite p. 196), containing fresh water for Bruin. His owner fetched a piece of dried fish, and holding it before a hole in the cage, the bear, who was of full size, thrust his great paw out to grasp the fish, the while I snapped him with my camera. This animal, having already attained his majority, was due to play the chief *rôle* at a festival in the following January.

The bear fête, which probably originated as a purely religious festival, has become a "Bank Holiday" in the Gilyak calendar, the great break in the monotony of the long winter. The proceedings are unique and interesting.

The animal having been captured young, and fed up until he attains the age of four, a fête is decided upon for the following January. Invitations are then sent round to neighbouring villages, whose inhabitants, however, need no such announcement, for they are already well aware of the coming event. On the morning before the fête the village presents a busy scene as the guests arrive in great numbers, their sledges, drawn by teams of dogs, dashing up from all parts of the snow-mantled forest.

Great preparations of food have been made for days past. The huts are crowded, and hospitality is freely dispensed. At the same time the owner of the bear and his neighbours will be gainers by the feast, for luxuries such as tobacco, rice, vodka, etc., are *on sale*, and will bring in a goodly profit. The staple article of the feast is of course *yukola*, or dried fish, but a variety of dishes is concocted by the Gilyak housewife, with this as a base. Dried and frozen hard, it is grated to fine powder and mixed with seal-oil and whortleberries; and when you add to these three ingredients rice, salmon-roe, and roots, the possible combination of messes are many, and the results to the Gilyak highly palatable. The roots in most common use are *pu-chi* and *pis* (species of wild rhubarb, I believe). These are in demand for flavouring their stew of bear's, deer's or seal's flesh; while a lily, which they name *kashk*, is eaten generally with fish-roe. At special feasts and near Russian settlements, the guests may be regaled with potatoes, in which case they are doled out sparingly, and not a particle of them or their skins must be wasted.

The day before the feast a rehearsal is held. Several men of the village go with the owner to the cage and proceed to lift off one or two of the roofing logs. Inserting a thong in the form of a loop at the end of a stick, they skilfully slip this over the head of the bear, and then over a paw and shoulder to prevent strangling him when the strap is tightened. To this loop are attached other thongs,

FEEDING BRUIN. (*P.* 195.)

"HE EMERGES TOO READILY." (*P.* 197.)

"THE GILYAKS PROCEED TO MUZZLE HIM." (*P.* 197.)

"LED TO THE HUT OF HIS OWNER." (*P.* 197.)

THE BEAR FÊTE.

[*To face page* 196.

and the men can now proceed to unroof further and haul him out. In the case of the bigger bears the hauling is generally unnecessary, for he emerges too readily with a snarl and a growl ; and the one thing desirable now is to pull all the thongs taut, to prevent him attacking one or other of his captors. Methods differ slightly in different parts of the island ; but in this case the reader will see by the illustration that native-made ropes of grass were looped over his paws ; and to prevent his doing harm these ropes were carried under a pole placed between his fore- and hind-legs, and projecting on each side of him, on which several men stood. Held thus it was impossible for him to move his paws, and now the Gilyaks could proceed to muzzle him. Taking a piece of stick with a rope attached they teased him until he took it in his mouth, whereupon his muzzle was quickly and tightly bound to this "bit." To complete his toilet, in place of the leather band round his neck and shoulder, a seal-skin collar with two short lengths of chain was slipped over his neck. To the ends of the chains were attached thongs, which served for him to be led about by.

The animal was then taken for a short walk to test his new "dress," and afterwards tied up and eventually put back again in the cage. Thus ended the rehearsal. It is quickly described, but the actual process takes a long time, the getting of the animal ready for evacuating the cage occupying half an hour.

The following day the same performance was gone through, and the animal led to the hut of his owner and around it three times. Each time that he passed the door the master poked him with a *tzakh*, or twig adorned with shavings, and broke it with the force of the thrust. This circumambulation was done to the strains of a unique band. Three or four young women, keeping time, beat with sticks on a log supported on short uprights. This highly varied "musical" performance was accompanied by

dancing. Although the "artiste" in this case was the oldest woman of the village, the display was far more interesting than the ritualistic dancing which the traveller in the East meets with generally, such for instance as that of young girls in the sacred temple of Nara in Japan.

First of all the old lady, dressed in seal-skins, stamped down the deep snow, and formed a little level square plat. Then taking two pieces of evergreens she threw herself into queer postures, using the branches as fans. Her movements were not rapid, but occasionally, and all unwittingly, she overstepped the limit of the plat and fell floundering in the deep snow, to the amusement of band and spectators too; but this in no way disconcerted her, for she came up laughing to renew the performance.

The bear was then paraded down an avenue of *tzakhs* stuck in the ground, to the place of execution. On the mainland there is much more merciless teasing of the animal than on Sakhalin. On the banks of the Amur the poor brute is dragged round for three days, and visits each hut in turn, where he is tied up and poked and teased, not always without danger to his tormentors. The smallness of the Sakhalin dwellings prevent such exhibitions on the part of the bear. While the poor animal was left tied up to ruminate over his position, the natives went off to feast; but first they took of their luxuries, rice, whortleberries, etc., and fed their victim until he could eat no more. This is a characteristic trait of their attitude towards Bruin. They were about to kill him, yet they fêted him. It was an attitude of apology. They realized that their conduct must appear ambiguous to him, and therefore, though he had to die at their hands, yet they would do all that they could to retain his good-will. Therefore they feast him loyally with all manner of dainties before he meets his fate at their hands.

When the feasting, drinking, smoking, and talking were at an end, a start was made for the execution-ground. On

"TO THE STRAINS OF A UNIQUE BAND." (*P.* 197.)

"LEFT TIED UP TO RUMINATE OVER HIS POSITION." (*P.* 198.)

"A FEW . . . SHOOT BLUNT, WOODEN-ENDED ARROWS." (*P.* 199.)

"THE ARROW HAD MISSED THE HEART." (*P.* 200.)

their way the company halted at the beginning of the avenue to allow a few of their number to shoot blunt, wooden-ended arrows towards the bear. There seemed no attempt on their part to hit the animal, or else they ignominiously failed, for the shots were lamentably short of or beyond the mark. This appears to be only another example of the weakening of traditional custom, for the shooting with blunted arrows *at* the poor bear was one of the greatest pieces of "fun" in olden times. Arrived at the ground the crowd grouped itself in front of the animal in a semicircle.

I have already said that customs differ from coast to coast, and from village to village, and here is a point of divergence. In many cases I believe the *cham*, or medicine-man, is not called in to officiate, possibly because the influence of his office is on the wane, and as the Tro Gilyaks told me "we have no great *cham* now." The following, however, is the part played by this functionary at this juncture, as given me by an observer on the island.

The *cham*, with a pine-twig in his hand, amid the deep silence of the spectators, goes close to the bear and whispers in its ear—

"You have eaten many berries,
"You have caught many fish,
"You have frightened many people;
"Your ancestors and your comrades have 'broken' many Gilyaks:
"Therefore you must die for it.
"But your 'host' has fed you three whole years, not stinting the delicious *yukola* (dried fish),
"He has given you the best water,
"He has taken you for walks,
"He has bathed you thrice a day* in the 'summer year,'
"And three 'winter years' you have lived in a nice warm lodging;
"He, your host, will not kill you:
"Therefore you must not complain about him to the great lord of the mountains."

* I am afraid this is imposing on the bear's memory. It is such a difficult business getting him out of his cage; and those I saw were not taken out more frequently, it was then autumn, than once a fortnight for a constitutional.

At the end of this adjuration the *cham* moves a little to one side, still holding the pine-twig over the bear's head. At this point the accounts agree. An archer now came forward, and at a couple of yards or so from the bear fitted his iron-tipped arrow to the bow. The animal, however, would not expose his heart, and had to be teased until he turned round, when the archer let fly. Strangely enough poor Bruin emitted no sound, but simply tried to rub the arrow out with his paw, and failing to do so, sat looking round as if nothing had happened. The arrow had missed the heart, but pierced the lung, and the animal, still making no sign of pain, only coughed. Another arrow was shot, but this time merely hit the collar. The first was then pulled out, and the blood now finding vent, the poor beast sank down and died. When quite dead, the women came forward with sticks and lifted up the paws, and the carcase was dragged round the execution-ground three times.

When the *cham* is present, he first cuts out the heart of the bear, and dividing it, gives the pieces to the most honoured members present. To these partakers of the heart of the sacrificed beast will be assured successful hunts during the whole of the season.

The skin having been quickly stripped in this case, the carcase was cut up and the cauldrons were soon steaming with bear stew. All the delicacies of dried fish, rice, roots, roe, seal-oil, etc., were brought forth, and the feasting again began. The men sat in groups, the women waited upon them and then took part in the feast. The youths competed in archery, wrestling, and running, while primitive musical instruments were brought forth and songs were sung, telling of the exploits of heroes of the hunt. A favourite game with them is a game of ball. The aim is to keep it bounding in the air without its touching the ground. Only the hands may be used. The ball is made from the fungus of a tree.

The original signification of the whole ceremony of the feast is largely lost, but the religious motive in the minds of the Gilyaks of to-day seems to be the sending of a messenger to the great lord of the mountains, *Pal ni vookh*, to witness to their punctilious observances of the rites of offerings; and, in order that their messenger may not miss his destination, it was usual, and is, I believe, still so among some villages to assist the spirit of the bear in finding his way to *Pal ni vookh*. Two aids were given him, one the planting of a stick on the execution-ground, pointing to the east where the great lord lived, and the other, the killing of two dogs, whose spirits were to hunt Bruin's spirit to *Pal ni vookh*. For it was explained that the bear, though he was a Gilyak was not a pious Gilyak. He would eat of the provisions made for him and all dwellers in the *taiga* by *Pal ni vookh* and *Tol ni vookh*, the lords of the forest and water, but in nothing would he give thanks; whereas a true Gilyak always made offerings after every meal, therefore it could not be expected that he should know where to find *Pal ni vookh*, or if knowing should be inclined to go to him. Even Vanka was always most punctilious in placing some fish or tobacco on the ashes of our camp-fire as offerings to *Pal ni vookh*, and on one occasion we owed, so he assured us, our preservation from a watery grave to this timely act of his.

Probably the fact of the bear being the most difficult and dangerous animal to capture adds to the value of the offering, of which the bear's spirit would be a witness. There is another consideration which lurks, however unconsciously, behind this ceremony. Not only is the bear the most dangerous animal to capture, although now the custom has deteriorated to the seizure of cubs and the rearing of them; but he is also the strongest rival of the Gilyaks. He lives, as they do, on the fish of the river, the berries of the forest; and even robs the Gilyaks' snares of the small animals caught therein. Therefore on every

count he must die. It is useless to ask the Gilyaks of to-day the *raison d'être* of the custom, for they do not know ; and, in any case, they would not reveal to a stranger the hidden meaning of their rites. The following is how a Russian fared when he tried to find out the signification of the ceremony, and I met with no more success.

Gilyak. It means the offering to *Pal ni vookh.*

Russian. Why do you not recite about it during the killing of the bear ?

Gilyak. I don't know.

Russian. Do the Gilyaks punish the bear for his crimes ?

Gilyak. No.

Russian. Why does the *cham* recite these charges in the bear's ear ?

Gilyak. The Gilyaks have done this from ancient times. Ask the old men, perhaps they know something about it.

The old men, however, on being asked, knew no more.

There is one incident in the ceremonial which I have not mentioned, but which possesses some special significance. This is the saving of the bear's head, which is never on any account eaten. A skin offered to me, and the fells of the dogs which I bartered for were all minus the heads.

It is noticeable that while the bear's head is not eaten, the heart is. The latter will bring success and courage to the hunters, but I gathered that the Gilyak believes the eating of the brain would render the consumer bear-like, and an enemy to his fellows. The skull is relegated at length to the Gilyak cemetery, and there, with skulls of dolphins, etc., placed on sticks. This is a habit common among the Ainus, who, however, place theirs near their huts and make offerings of *sake* (spirit), etc., to pacificate them and gain their protection ; whereas the Gilyaks' cemeteries are in the secret recesses of the woods, and are not frequented by them. What the idea that lies at the

root of these golgothas, is, I do not know; but it seems probable that they think the remains of the animals whose spirits have gone back to the great *Pal ni vookh* should rest near those of the Gilyak; or that the spirits of these animals will come back to these spots and either guard the remains of the Gilyak or at least refrain from haunting the living.

CHAPTER XII

CHAIVO BAY AND BEYOND

An Orochon village—Strange surroundings—A monopolist—Preparations for a great feast—The New Year's festival—Barter—Our host "the richest man in the world"—The value of a needle—Petroleum lakes—The tundra—An unwritten tragedy.

LEAVING this Bruin at Kamavo, who was soon destined to be chief actor in a spectacle such as I have described, we returned to pick up a new crew, and continue our journey northwards. We were now bound for a spot lying three or four miles from the coast in the *tundra*, where two engineers were prospecting, about eighty miles distant, and we expected to take two or three days in getting to it. In reaching this locality we should have passed beyond the last known settlement of the Gilyaks and Orochons. Our crew consisted of a Gilyak elder and two youths. The old man's name was Yungkin, but we called him Captain, or Charon, indiscriminately, for I could not look at him without his calling to mind the famous ferryman of the river Styx.

We made good progress, for our new crew were good oarsmen; Yungkin was reputed to know every inch of the coast, and, indeed, he had need to. On our left lay the low, swampy shore, backed in the far distance by forests, and a long range of hills. On our right were the sand-dunes, bare or scantily covered with coarse rush-grass, and stunted Swiss pine. Sandbanks were numerous, and all the skill and knowledge of our "captain" were

required to pilot us between them. Great flocks of gulls flew up at our approach, and sandpipers and snipe were wading and paddling in the ebbing sea. A couple of villages were passed, and, landing on a sandy islet, we shot a couple of snipe for our evening meal. By about 4 o'clock we were nearly opposite a narrow strait which gave entrance to the sea. Here the smooth surface of the bay was ruffled, and my interpreter, who, as a Russian, had had little experience of the sea, was seized with apprehension; but the sensation was really novel and delightful. It is impossible to describe the sense of buoyancy in a keel-less canoe riding on the crests or dipping into the troughs of the waves, but it was the nearest to floating in the air I expect to experience. After an hour or so the coast suddenly swerved inland for a considerable distance, and our "captain" steered across this to the distant shore. Darkness fell, and even he seemed to be rather puzzled. Several more miles were made before, at about 8.30 p.m., our "Charon" announced a village, and, peering into the darkness, I made out dimly the silhouette of some huts.

Firing my revolver twice, the customary signal in the absence of bells and knockers in this part of the world, the kindly Orochons hurried down to welcome us. They had received news of our approach, though how or when we did not know. The headman of Dagi, as this village was called, led us through the crowd of yelping dogs to his hut. Going on our hands and knees, we crept in, guns in hand, and, standing half erect, dodged the cross-poles, from which fish were hanging, until reaching the reindeer-skin politely spread in our honour, we sank hurriedly down on it. The reason of this hasty collapse was not far to seek. The smoke of the fire which filled the hut blinded us, and caused our eyes to stream. When I had mopped my organs of vision, and could look round, the oddness, the strangeness of the scene, impressed me; and I asked

myself, Would my friends ever receive me into their clean homes again?

The atmosphere was not only smoky, but thick with the greasy smell of fish hanging above our heads in the various stages of curing. Around the fire, which occupied the middle of the floor, or ground, were squatted about a score of strange figures, curiously clad. Here, were grimy, brown-faced women, suckling children, or smoking in turns from a Japanese pipe—a novel form of labour co-operation; there, were men in groups devouring morsels of scraggy dried fish from the same platter, and dipping them into a common bowl, or, rather, birch-bark basket of seal-oil. Close on my right was crouched an old woman, the grandmother apparently, clothed in skins, her unkempt raven locks straggling unheeded over her face. Her sight had almost forsaken her—small wonder with the decades of smoke she had endured—and the long lashes of her closed eyes alone were visible as she thrust forward her pipe for a light. It was promptly seized by a youngster of about four, who, snatching a burning faggot from the fire, lighted up, and gave three or four experimental puffs before passing it to the old lady. Babies were being rocked violently in cradles strung from the cross-poles, and tiny children were attempting to grope their way out of the recesses of the hut, where they were rolled up in a tent-covering, to peer at the strange arrivals. But of all our surroundings the most striking was that of the weird-looking faces, with unkempt hair, seen for one moment in the flickering blaze of the fire, and lost again in the gloom of the hut.

The Orochon summer-hut, which we now occupied for the first time, was of different construction to that of the Gilyaks'. In shape it was not unlike a tent, or a boat turned keel uppermost. A simple scaffolding in the interior supported a horizontal pole, against which were leaned a great number of larch-poles from all sides, the ground-plan of the hut being oval in shape. Pieces of

AN OROCHON MAN (MAINLAND). [*To face page* 206.

poplar bark were used as tiles, and outside these were again placed a few more poles to keep them on. A low entrance or exit of two or three feet, covered up at night, was left at each end, and a displaced piece of bark in the roof allowed some of the smoke to escape.

The Gilyak huts, with their crowd of inhabitants, their insect population, and thick atmosphere, were not ideal quarters for a fastidious person ; but to these disadvantages the Orochon added the odour of slices, heads, and tails of fish, rendered more powerful from a feebler attempt at ventilation. And yet as I lay on the skins, and gazed at the vaulted roof above me, I asked myself, Was there ever hall of panelled oak that spelled more clearly the family history, the story of its past dwellers. The poles and rich bark lining literally glowed like polished ebony, with more than the memory of many a thousand fish that had smoked over that cheery fire, and exuded the odour of generations of denizens of sea and river, which had fed and clothed the dwellers therein.

However unpleasant to the stranger this smoke-curing of fish by the Orochons while it lasts may be, it is one of the few advantages that they can claim over the Gilyaks. The latter is entirely dependent on a sunny season for the drying of his catch, and if it should be rainy, then he will be in danger of starvation before winter is over, from an insufficient accumulation of stores ; for dried fish is bread and meat to these tribes during the long winter. The Orochon, on the other hand, after hanging his fish to drain, as in the picture, slices and cuts them up and cures them in the shelter of his hut over his fire.

This curing only goes on during a portion of the summer season, but the effect of the smokiness of their huts seemed to me patent in the semi-closed eyes of the Orochon, a feature which renders him much more strange-looking than the Gilyak, whom he really surpasses in

intelligence. The latter is not a linguist, but the Orochon is generally found to speak both tongues. Moreover, the latter is a more energetic hunter and better trader. In some of their journeys across the island the Orochons had come into contact with the Russian priests. The effect of their conversion to the Greek Orthodox Church was to be seen in the severing of their pigtails, the abandonment (in a few cases) of the keeping of bears, and last, but not least, the transfer of many sable-skins to the priests.

The name of these people seems to be of Tungus origin. They are called by Dr. Schrenck, Oroken, but are known officially as Orotchons. In fact, these people and the Orochis, or Oroktis (Dr. Schrenck calls them Orotschen) of the Primorsk coast, the Oltschas of the Amgun river, and the Orotschonen (Dr. S.) of the Upper Amur, are all of a Tungus race, and scarcely distinguishable otherwise from one another, than by the occupation of different territories.

Among Tungus and Mongol peoples the letter "l" often takes the place of "r," so that Oltscha may be Orcha, Or'cha, or Orocha. Oronchun is the name by which they were known among the Manchus, and *oron*, or *oro*, is Tungus for a reindeer, hence what is meant is, that all these people are reindeer folk, or people who use reindeer.

This is the main distinction between the habits of the Orochons and Gilyaks. The former use reindeer for sledge-drawing, and the latter dogs. The last are kept by the former for hunting only. The Gilyak name on Sakhalin for the Orochon is *Or'nish*, and the latter calls himself *Orumada*.

We shall probably be near the truth in regarding them as a branch of the great Tungus race, of which the Manchu is the most civilized, and the so-called Tungus of Eastern Siberia the wildest representative. The Orochon is only a little less wild than the Tungus, but he appears to have

come more into contact with surrounding tribes, *e.g.* the Golds, Gilyaks, Samogirs, Daurians, Ainus, etc., and to have been influenced to lead a rather less nomadic life than the original stock. In summer he is settled as I found him. In winter the hunt carries him and his reindeer, and his portable skin tents, into the depths of the forest, and before spring arrives he is away with the spoils of the chase to the mainland to barter.

Among these tribes there appeared to be no traditions of a great chief or king. The Gilyaks are, as we have seen, divided into tribes, viz. the Tim, Tro, and west coast people, besides the mainland or Amur Gilyaks. These tribes are sub-divided into *khala*, or clans. Each *khal* consists of a family circle. The limits are vague, but include grandfathers, uncles, etc. The eldest representative of the *khal* is the chief, and the members are to be found scattered in many villages. Each village has its council of elders, to whom the injured apply. In cases of mortal offence, both parties, the criminal and the eldest male of the injured man's family, march out against one another with bows and arrows ready strung, but the council sitting around urge them to end the matter peacefully, and ordinarily they succeed, the rivals embrace, talk peace, and the criminal pays a heavy fine.

The Russian authorities wisely refrain from interference, and look to the richest man in each village, whom they term the *starosta*, to keep order, etc.

In earlier days prowess and skill in the hunt led to wealth and position in the village, but to-day, as with feudalism in Japan, these are giving way to trade as the stepping-stone. There is a Tungus known by the name of Maxim who is probably the richest native in the island, with all due deference to my friends, the brothers Fizik, whom we met afterwards. His gains are made by lending to other natives in the time of their need, and thus gaining a lien on the proceeds of their hunt. In this

way he tries to obtain a monopoly, and preclude the sale of skins to any but himself.

An amusing *rencontre* occurred between him and the prospectors. These had left on their hands, after the despatch of some of their convict workmen, some frieze *khalati*, and so they offered them in barter to the natives, who gladly accepted them. Maxim hearing of this, and, regarding it as poaching on his preserves, circulated stories of these two whites being *brodyagi*. The objects of his discrediting stories got wind of the fact, and when one day the monopolist arrived at their hut, he was allowed to enter, and was given a meal. They refused, however, to accept or purchase anything of him, and asked how it was he allowed himself to enter the hut of *brodyagi?*

This dumbfounded him, and he was taken off his guard. In vain he became profusely apologetic. "He had never thought them so. How could they think of such a thing?" etc.

But to return to the evening meal in the Orochon hut. The men had been served, and the women, having supplied their lords' wants, joined the children, and began their supper. Evidently this *starosta* (as the Russians, following their custom at home, chose to call the headman of the village) was a rich man, for rice was on the platter of the children, and one chubby little chap, of about three, was vainly endeavouring to convey his mess of fish and rice to his mouth by the aid of a cross between a chopstick and a spoon; but was fain to bring the left hand to bear to bundle it in. Next to him was a mother who, having finished hers, was preparing the platter for her neighbour. This was accomplished by licking it all over, drying it with a bunch of grass, and finally polishing it on her gaiters. After the meal the fire was banked up, and all prepared to retire. Men and women slipped off their gaiters, and rolled themselves in an extra tunic, and stretched themselves on the floor or ground of the hut.

Early morning saw the women astir, bringing fuel, and water from the river in their bark baskets, and making preparations for the meal of tea and *yukola* against the rousing of their lords. After this there was a great stir in the culinary department. As I lay on the reindeer-skin, I only slowly took in the importance of the proceedings. This was no less than the preparation of the Christmas plum-puddings, or what corresponded to it in the Orochon feastings. One woman was scraping off the scales from salmon-skins, and putting them in the cauldron, while another was busily pounding in a wooden trough, shaped like a butcher's tray, rice, fish, and whortleberries, and mixing with them seal-oil. This duly stirred and cooked was, I understood, to be partaken of with a dash of sea-water, to add, I suppose, the requisite delicate flavour. These operations were of a very serious nature, and the mixing and pounding lasted for hours. The importance of the feast lay in its inauguration of the sable hunt.

Among the Gilyaks the hunt is preceded by an interesting ceremony. The sable (*Mustela zibellina*) and seal hunts commence each a new year in the Gilyak kalendar, and thus he has two years to our one. If only the Gilyak child kept "birthdays," he would be the envy of his western compeers. These two years which begin in October and April respectively, are called the winter year (*tulf-an*) and summer year (*tolf-an*), and are opened by holiday festivals. The sable holiday goes by the name of *Pal ni vookh chi-sonch*, or "the prayer to the lord of the forest."

It is a wintry scene. The snares are set on logs and branches spanning the narrow streams and forest creeks. The first snows have fallen, covering all the forest with a thin mantle of white. The cold north wind hurries across the land. The trees stand silent in the sombre depths, hanging their hoary, lichen-covered branches, and amidst the hush a shadow steals quietly across the scene.

It is a sable. He goes by accustomed paths. He does not care to swim the cold water, but seeks a fallen tree or log whereon to pass. All unsuspectingly he creeps along a trunk, only to find his way blocked by a tiny barrier of sticks, arranged in the shape of a fan; nevertheless a way, one way, is left, and that through a loop in the centre. Rising on his hind-legs and pushing through, he struggles, and in so doing releases a peg hitched with a ratchet, and a bent twig at one end of the cord flies back, tightening the noose. Many trackers are out, but each brings his first catch to one place, where due honour is then paid to the great giver of them, the lord of the forest. It would savour of greediness, of meat without grace, to start off on the important hunt of the sables—creatures whose skins are so valuable that anything, even in later times "fire-drink," may be purchased with them—without due acknowledgment to the giver. A feast is made; for what function can dispense with feasting? and pieces of roasted flesh, tobacco, etc., are dug into the ground as an offering to the god, just as in the seal festival, we shall see, bones are cast into the sea. At this point it is necessary, lest he be not observing or engaged elsewhere, to call the attention of *Pal ni vookh* to their offering, so they whisper, "*Chookh, Chookh*," *i.e.* "God, Thou God." They do this in an undertone, lest the *pal-rush* (*daimones*) should hear; for these evil spirits dwell in the swamps and the depths of the forest, and might make off with the offerings. For this reason, and because *Pal ni vookh* generally walks among the mountains, the Gilyaks take the precaution of making their offering on high ground.

When the hunting season is advanced, another method for the capture of the sable is adopted. The native sets out with his dogs, who quickly find the tracks of the little animal, and drive it up a tree. The hunter then lets fly a blunted arrow, and, if skilful, stuns his prey. With fair success he may thus catch seven or eight sables

in a day. He is careful so to kill them as not to injure the skin, and in skinning he strips it off like a sock. Half of the flesh he gives to the dogs, and the other half he offers to *Pal ni vookh.*

The Orochons, though more advanced than the Gilyaks, did not practise the art of washing, and, when I proceeded to perform a portion of my toilet outside the hut, there was considerable excitement. I refer, with apologies, to the operation of cleaning my teeth. It was sufficient to gather about ten of the tribe around me, one in particular taking a specially good coign of vantage directly opposite me, and all talking volubly on the subject. Unfortunately, I did not understand their tongue, but I guessed that they had constituted themselves an informal committee of anthropologists to discuss the object, means, and probable origin of such an interesting ceremony.

With strangers, both the Orochons and Gilyaks were sober, rather solemn, and reserved; but on becoming familiar they expanded, and became at times jolly and full of fun. On this occasion a mistake of theirs occasioned much merriment, so much so that the incident, simple as it was, has now no doubt become part of the history handed down by tradition.

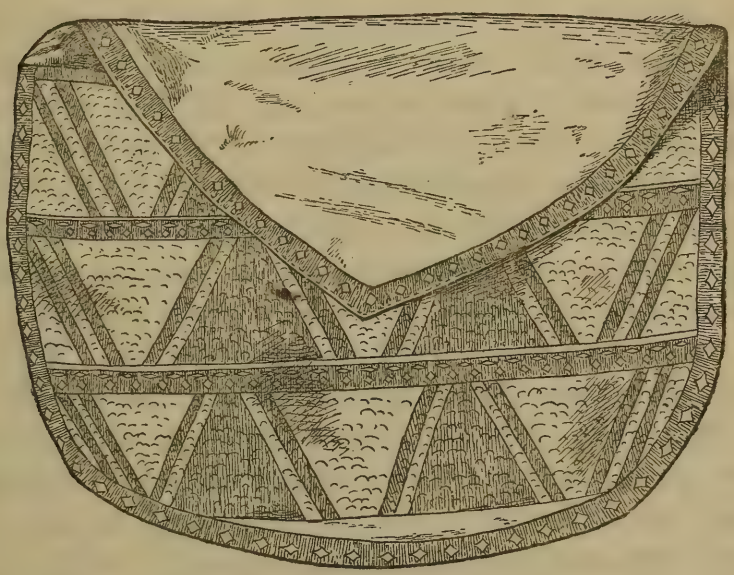
Our baggage had not recovered from the effects of its soaking, and, producing from the depths thereof a cricketing shirt, still wet, I asked them, in Russian, with explanatory gesticulations, to dry it. Hastening off with it they immediately plunged it into water; but when the mistake had been explained to them by our Gilyak "captain," they saw in it an excellent joke, and burst into loud laughter. Their appreciation of it did not end here, for some days after, when we had returned to our river-crew, there was a good deal of merriment in the hut one evening, and, in answer to my inquiry, I learnt that the story of the shirt was being told again.

Before pushing on from this village, I brought out cloth, buttons, gunpowder, etc., in order to barter for utensils and native clothing. At the time the women were busy preparing fish-skins for dress material, and, indeed, they seemed always to be busily occupied, whereas the men, whose work was arduous at times, enjoyed long periods of rest and laziness. The latter, all save a youth or two who were hewing out a boat, and some who had gone to drive in the reindeer from the forest, were squatted smoking and chatting.

The proposal to barter brought all together, and an old lady began proceedings by proudly displaying her wardrobe to me. On my side, in addition to the buttons, etc., coloured neck-kerchiefs, needles, brick-tea, tobacco, etc., were forthcoming. The bargaining was severe, for the headman of the hut was well-to-do, and stood out for good prices. With the aid of four languages, viz. English, Russian, Gilyak, and Orochon, bargains were arranged, and I found myself the happy possessor of some child's seal-hide shoes and the old lady's work-bag, such as one imagines will be taken to an Orochon "sewing meeting" when that point of civilization is reached! I fear my lady friends would scarcely appreciate it, though it is a work of art. Composed entirely of fish-skins, it is rather smelly; but considerable ingenuity and skill have been displayed in piecing together the skin of the lighter (the belly) and the darker parts (the back) of the fish into a pattern. In shape it is like an ordinary flap-purse (p. 215).

Resuming our journey again, we found that the bay beyond Dagi gradually narrowed to a mere passage, and grew so shallow that we stuck several times on sandbanks, although our canoe drew but three or four inches of water. At last our natives were compelled to get out, and go on voyages of discovery for the less shallow channels through which to drag the canoe. We were

thus slowly proceeding through this wild and desolate region, with nought but sandhills and coarse rush grass to be seen, when suddenly at a turn we came upon three Russians. We were on the alert at once, but a suspicion of the truth dawned upon us when we saw their boat. They were convicts in the employ of the petroleum prospector, and, having been sent to bring along some casing left behind on account of the shallows, had got stuck here, and were waiting for the incoming tide. With our lighter craft we were more successful, and crept on until the



passage opened out into Chaivo Bay.* Here great flocks of ducks and geese, gathering for migration south, warned us of the approaching close of the short Siberian autumn. As we emerged into the bay, our old "captain" steered in a westerly direction for the prehistoric shore, and after five or six hours of rowing, we expected to be nearing our haven, the Orochon village of Val. We were looking forward to great things here, for had not Yungkin, who

* Chaivo is, in the first place, the name of a village. *Chai* or *cha* in Gilyak means bay, and *vo* a village; hence, the bay village.

is a Gilyak elder and an authority on all matters in the Tro Gilyak world, informed us that we should sleep that night in the home of the richest man in the world? Such an experience in this part of the globe we had not expected—in fact, my dress-suit was ten or twelve days' journey off. Our curiosity was aroused. What would this Vanderbilt and his home be like? Should we find a galaxy of electric light and a host of liveried servants?

The two-days-old moon had set, and no sign did we see of approaching magnificence. If we had marvelled on the previous night how our old native had found his way, it was even more astonishing on this occasion; but there came a point when even he had to confess failure, and our chance of meeting with the great plutocrat seemed fast diminishing. Where were we? That was the question. A low cliff, visible until now, had disappeared in the darkness; but we began to feel a slight current, and, surely, that on our left was the mouth of a river? We tried and found it to be so. We could dimly descry trees and bushes silhouetted against the sky. The river had many arms, perhaps we were in a delta? If so, which was the main stream? We could not tell; so chose as we might, and rowed on for about a verst. Peering into the darkness, not a sign of huts could be made out. At last, in the hope of awakening some answering cry or the howl of their dogs, we hallooed, and then discharged our revolvers. Once—twice—thrice; but no answer came borne on the night-breeze save the cry of some startled water-fowl. Cold, stiff, and hungry on a waste of waters, was it to end in our camping shelterless in this swamp? The situation was discussed, and we resolved to descend the river again to its mouth and grope along the coast in the darkness. Half an hour or more passed when, creeping along, we fired again; and soon after, to our relief, the glimmer of a light was seen,

followed by the barking of dogs. Steering for the spot and firing our revolvers, dark figures were soon running down the banks to help beach the canoe and carry our impedimenta up to the huts. What was the palace of this Vanderbilt, or rather Vanderbilts, for there were two brothers, like? It differed nothing in appearance from the other huts, saving only that it was a little larger, measuring perhaps 22 × 16 feet. Wherein, then, consisted their wealth? They possessed, we were assured, more than sufficient fish, roots, rice, tea, tobacco to last them through the winter, and many skins; but, above all, they owned at least seventy reindeer between them, more than all the other Orochons together, so our Gilyak interpreter told us. To my inquiries did this wealthy family live any differently from others of the tribe, and how did they enjoy their wealth, the reply was, "They ate similar food because it was the 'law' (custom), but they had more sledges, and went more frequently in winter to Nikolaevsk to dispose of their greater quantity of reindeer, furs, etc."

I suspect that luxuries, including rice and gaudy material such as Chinese silk brocade, kept partly as an investment of capital and sometimes for the lying in state, were the indulgences their superior possessions allowed them. Then, too, the rich had the privilege of dispensing to the poor, and of being held in repute for their hospitality which brought not only satisfaction in this world and the next, but power over the recipients.

We gave a lot of trouble here, as I thought, but our host—Vanderbilt, or, to give him his proper name, Fizik—and the various members of the family, were most obliging; and without the slightest objection the lower cross-poles were cleared of fish and wiped, at our request, so that our still sodden rugs might be hung up to dry. The interior presented a similar scene to that of the night before. As usual, there were the representatives of three

generations in the hut, including the old grandmother, her married sons, their wives and children, besides guests. By the glow of the fire one could see several men rending raw fishes' heads with their teeth, others at another course of dried fish and seal-oil, and yet others smoking sedately, criticizing at intervals the white strangers, or watching the children, to whom they seemed much attached. On our right was the wife of our host's brother, who was away in the forest minding the reindeer, and we had our attention specially called to her as the prettiest woman in Sakhalin, and one with whom all the men fell in love! The privilege of gazing on her unrivalled beauty was, I am afraid, lost upon us, for we lamentably failed to appreciate her charms.

Throwing myself on the reindeer-skin for the night, my last waking glance was at line upon line, row upon row of drying fish, as far as the eye could penetrate into the dim recesses of the roof.

The next morning, having breakfasted upon black bread, the last of some week-old butter, and cocoa, we set out to inspect the vast possessions of our host, to wit, the herd of reindeer. Stepping into a canoe, we had the honour of being paddled for a mile or so by the "richest man in the world." In ascending the river, which wound among the lowlands, I was struck by the great contrast in the scenery. Instead of sandy wastes, dwarf and stunted Swiss pine, wild swamps or dense forests, we were now on a river that seemed to wind through meadows and parks. Sheltered from the rude blasts and the cold current of the Okhotsk Sea, the banks were rich in flowers and rushes. Willows and nut-trees bending over the water's edge made shady reaches, where, in the cool mysterious depths, fish hid; and stately firs, graceful mountain-ash, or a dark group of Swiss pine stood in ornamental relief against the light green of the meadows. At a spot known to our guide we disembarked, and, guns in hand, strode through

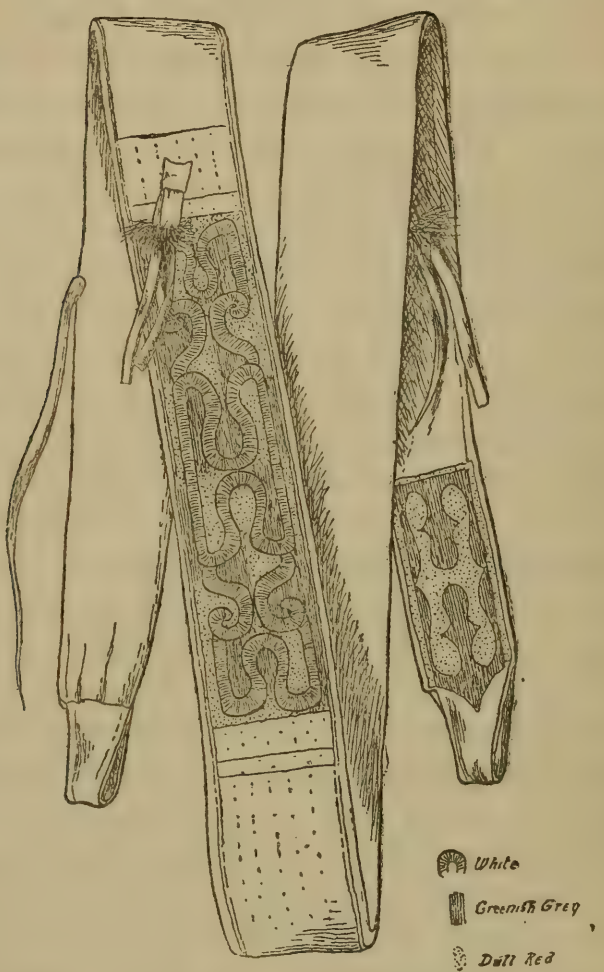
low scrub until we came upon a knoll-covered clearing. From here we caught sight of the distant herd, feeding on the lichen-covered moorland. The more restless were tethered, others, including the young, were free. Members of a herd occasionally get astray, but they are marked, to distinguish them from wild game, which, however, does not always prevent their being shot, accidentally or otherwise. Large, powerfully built animals, of a grey-buff colour, and occasionally all white, one understands, on seeing them, their power to support a rider or draw a sledge.

Creeping round to leeward of the herd we found our host's brother lodged in a little drill-tent. Our larder being low, we proposed to buy a couple of haunches of venison, but they refused to kill unless we took the whole carcase, and this at the exorbitant price of thirty rubles. In Nikolaevsk, in winter, when fresh meat is very scarce, and at the end of several hundred miles' journey, a reindeer is sold for twenty-five rubles. Moreover, as we learnt afterwards, they had disposed of one recently for eight rubles, and had only three days before killed another for their own use. Evidently they thought we were legitimate spoil; but we were not to be done, and ultimately secured a haunch on our return at a reasonable price, the payment for which included, I remember, two reels of cotton.

We induced one of the brothers to milk a doe, one of the herd, as I had always been curious to taste reindeer's milk. I found it very thick, sweet, and exceedingly rich. Having photographed "the richest man in the world" we returned to the village. A little bartering was done before our departure, and one particularly finely worked piece of reindeer harness I was fortunate enough to secure. The maker of it, an old lady, was very loth to part with what had taken her, she avowed, three years to work—three years of very few spare moments I should opine. It is a wide strap of seal-skin embroidered with

white reindeer hair in the Gilyak fashion, with cockerel-like convolutions which are probably Gold, or rather, Chinese in origin. Hair from the reindeer's mane, fish-gut, and nettle-fibre are the sewing material of these tribes.

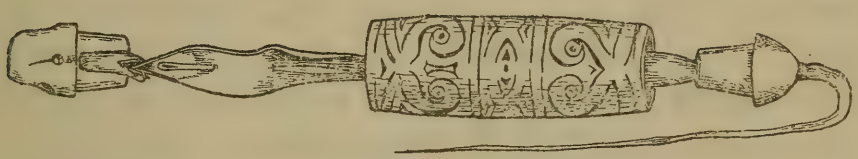
How important a part sewing must have played in



the domestic economy can be imagined, when clothing consisted of salmon-skins, a material which could not be ordered over the counter by the yard, but had to be diligently stitched together to form an adequate covering. In early times bone needles were used, but when, by accident or by barter, a big ship's canvas-needle came into their hands, it was a priceless treasure. How eagerly

such was sought after and seldom obtained. The happy possessor handed it down as a family heirloom. In those days they tell us a needle was of such value that a wife could be bought with it; whereas to-day a helpmeet may cost as much as a *narta* (sledge) and team of thirteen dogs. To keep the needle safe, bone cases (*nookh-tses*), curiously carved, were made; and it is interesting to note that the principle on which they work is exactly the same as that of the little silk ones made to-day in Korea.

The following shows the value they used to put upon the needle. A Russian came upon a Gilyak family crying and howling.



"Why are you crying?" he asked. "Is somebody dead?"

"No! What is death? It would have been better had somebody died. The *needle* is lost!"

The afternoon saw us once more pursuing a northerly course. On the opposite shores of Chaivo Bay, on the sandbanks, were Vurkovo and Chaivo, both Gilyak settlements, and New Val, an Orotchon village. North of these there were none known, save only a solitary hut or two occupied occasionally merely for the fishing.

These we could visit on our return, our present objective was the hut of a prospector four miles inland from the coast. A couple of hours' rowing brought us within sight of another river, known as the Boatassin. As we approached it two figures on the left bank were moving about and disappearing rather suspiciously, but as we neared land they showed themselves quite openly, and we saw that one of them was a soldier, though his uniform was

old, shabby, and much the worse for wear. Having landed our baggage with some difficulty, for the tide was still on the ebb, we found it impossible to carry all of it the six versts (four miles) to the hut, and therefore stowed all the heavier articles in a cave close by. Our "captain" would not desert his canoe, so we left him on guard while we distributed the baggage among our retinue.

Our Gilyaks had showed extraordinary powers of endurance in rowing, but they were ill-fitted to carry loads on shore. We therefore arranged our cavalcade accordingly, the soldier leading the way, followed by his companion, the exile who had been responsible for two murders, then Mr. X., my interpreter, and the two Gilyaks—I bringing up the rear. Our way lay through what had been dense forest a short while since, but was now denuded of its undergrowth. At first I blamed this wanton destruction, but, when I had made the acquaintance of the surviving mosquitoes, I sympathized with those who had fired their way through the forest. We passed over hill slopes, almost snow-clad in appearance, covered with the lichen which the reindeer loves, and among hoary-looking trees hung with a capillary lichen which he also favours. The slopes gave way at length to swamps temporarily bridged with larch-poles, along which it was necessary to walk Blondin-like. We were met and heartily welcomed by the prospector's son, and, strange as it may seem, by an English youth who by a series of curious chances found himself in this wild out-of-the-world spot. They had preceded us by about two months.

Petroleum, known for a long time to the natives, and reported on by the Government expert, Mr. Bazevich, in 1894, had been discovered to the prospector, who had extended his search until he had found, not only exusions of it on this spot, but lakes of it a few miles north near the Nutovo river. One of these, which had a diameter of about eighteen feet, was in a state of bubbling upheaval.

The others had a surface of bituminous mud, owing to the evaporation of the oil, which was soft, but at the same time offered sufficient resistance to allow of walking upon it. In boring at a spot four miles north of the Boatassin river, eternally frozen ground had been found at a depth of ten and a half metres. This is very low, and accounts for the *tundra* hereabouts being less pronounced than on the north-west shores. On the west coast Dr. Poliakov reported it in midsummer, on July 1, at half a metre's depth, in the valley of the Duika (Great Alexandrovka) river.

A year after I reached this spot, a Russian petroleum expert, Mr. R. S. Platonov, despatched by the Baku Manufacturers Trust, visited and inspected the neighbourhood. On the same trip he had already paid a visit to the Texas and Pennsylvanian oil-fields. According to the Russian newspaper, the *Kavkaz* (Caucasus) of June, 1903, he takes a very optimistic view of the wealth and extent of the Sakhalin fields. He is reported as saying that all he had seen in America was as nothing compared to that which he had found in Sakhalin. He is even made to assert that the fields situated on the banks of the river Nutovo exceed those of Baku in all respects. The oil is said to contain no benzine, and therefore to be capable of immediate use as fuel. Such a discovery may prove of use both to the Russian Fleet, the Manchurian and Ussuri railways; and by refining to the vast hordes of consumers of lamp-oil in China, Korea, and Japan.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Platonov's hopeful report may not be belied, and that the supplies may prove to be deep-lying; for should they be actively worked, they will prove incidentally a god-send to the "exile settlers," who, from the absence of employment, drift in large numbers of cases into their old ways.

In 1898, a discovery of gold was made, and a company was formed, which soon however gave up. It was rumoured that eternally frozen earth was struck, and proceedings

stopped. Frozen soil presents no insuperable difficulties, but probably the gravels were situated at a considerable depth (in the Vitim district * they are said to be frozen to a depth of 150 feet), and therefore were quite unprofitable to work.

Owing to the frozen subsoil of the *tundra,* in summer the surface water cannot drain off, and the land presents a region of swamps and meres shrouded in a sun-lit mist, covered with coarse dank grass, gnarled and stunted bushes of larch and birch, and low clusters of berry-ladened brushwood; and in winter a frozen waste, over which the Tungus course with their reindeer sledges.

The two nights following were spent in the log-hut, which accommodated the prospectors and the convicts whom they employed. Through a long low room, with beaten earth for floor, occupied by the latter, we reached the living and sleeping quarters of the masters. Adjoining these was the store-room, containing kegs of salt beef, potatoes, flour, etc., for it was necessary to provision as for a siege. Externally this store-room resembled an earth-work, a form of erection common in Siberia, and designed to exclude the extreme cold and heat.

It was a rude life, and lonely, separated as they were by a journey of 300 miles by sea and river from even the nearest Russian penal settlement. In sickness, accident, or danger from *brodyagi*, they had themselves alone to rely upon. Their convicts behaved fairly well, and proved moderately faithful since they were treated well, and knew that they were ever so much better off than they would be in the hands of officials; but in the event of any *brodyagi* coming along, the masters had to be prepared to find their men neutral; but that is a story which comes later.

Winter, which would have added to the dreariness of their situation, brought them release, for without proper

* North-east of Lake Baikal.

buildings as protection against a cold of – 40° or – 50° (Fahr.), work could not be carried on.

It was six or seven weeks later that they started to return to Derbensk. By punting, rowing, and towing, the convicts got the boat as far as the shallows which connect the Bays of Chaivo and Ni. Here they were brought to a standstill by ice, which for some distance they had already broken through. There was nothing for it but to return, which was more easily said than done, for the ice had meanwhile drifted, and was congealing between them and their point of embarkation. They, therefore, made land at a nearer point, the Orochon village of Old Val, and found their way overland to their hut. On their way they came across a Gilyak hut, in which reclined in various postures six skeletons. An inquiry was afterwards made as to the manner of their death, whether it was the work of *brodyagi;* but it was generally concluded that they had died of eating bad fish.

The position of the prospectors was now difficult, for the provisions would not last them and their men more than a few weeks, and means of transport there were none. Much against their wish, but rather than risk starvation, ten of the convicts were given as much stores as they could carry, and started off to make their way on foot. A Gilyak guided them by tracks known to him, and along the frozen river, until after many weary days they reached their destination. Their employers had meanwhile waited in the hope of finding Gilyaks who would take them on their sledges as soon as the bays and river would allow it. For some time the thermometer had registered below zero (Fahr.), and after considerable trouble Gilyaks were found who took them on sledges drawn by thirteen dogs round the bays and up the Tim to a village called Ishir, whence they made their way through the forest to Ado Tim, sleeping on the way in the open, with the thermometer registering 49° of frost (Fahr.). Sledging on the river, the guiding

poles occasionally penetrated the ice, and where the current was exceptionally fast was open water. It is a curious fact that in places the upper waters of the Tim, with a temperature of 40° to 50° below zero, do not freeze, and here comes the whiteheaded eagle (*Haliëtus albicillus*) to fish. In fact the Gilyaks call the month of February *Cham-long*, or eagle month, as they name March *Karr-long*, or crow month.

The day following our arrival at the petroleum well we essayed to continue northwards, to visit the oil-lakes on the Nutovo river. Retracing our steps to our canoe, we started with our crew to go round by the bay, intending to ascend the river. However, we had gone but five miles when "white horses," or as the Russians say, "white sheep," were descried ahead. We were loth to be baulked by a storm, and ignored the protestations of our crew until the waves, threatening to swamp the canoe, forced us to desist from our purpose, and reluctantly turn back from attempting to penetrate farther along the north-eastern coast than any white man had hitherto done. For seven miles our "bark" was driven before the storm, but our skilful "captain," with his paddle, kept us from drifting broadside. Wetted through to the skin we landed once more at the mouth of the Boatassin. Here we were met by two or three Orochons, with a message of welcome from the headman of the village of New Val, across the bay.

Pushing on once more to the hut, we spent that night with our hospitable hosts, and the next morning were accompanied by them on land and sea as far as the village of New Val. Time would not allow of my pressing on further to the north; there were no natives to be met with, nor could we at this time of the year get our Gilyaks to consent to delay their return longer; already we had overstayed our time, and we found on reaching the Bay of Ni, two days later, that our river crew were on the point of departing without us.

On our way through the forest one of our hosts led me aside to seek the site of an unwritten tragedy. Searching for some time in different directions, and hallooing to one another, we at last hit upon it. What we saw is pictured in our illustration—a rude Russian cross made from three stakes. The story, though unrecorded in the pages of history, was clearly revealed on the spot. A small band of *brodyagi*, pushed hard by soldiers, and perhaps attracted by the presence of the prospectors' stores, had found their way as far north as this. They had managed to exist on reindeer, and one of their number must have fallen ill, as was evidenced by their staying a long time, a dangerously long time in one place. For they had been here long enough to consume several reindeer, obviously, from the quantity of antlers and bones, and the little footpath worn in the forest. Their sick companion may possibly have been injured in an encounter with a bear, or more probably had fallen ill owing to exposure; in either case he had lingered until dying they buried him in the *taiga*, neglecting not to raise the protecting ✝ over the grave of their poor outcast brother. It was a story as melancholy and pessimistic as any from the pen of a Russian novelist, but here Providence and Nature had been the writers.

CHAPTER XIII

WITH THE "CHAM" AT CHAIVO

An "inter-continental" boat-race—The *Cham* and the *Shaman*—Exorcising the evil spirit—Why the Gilyaks are without written characters—The journeys of a soul after death—Strange rites at the funeral pyre.

AT the mouth of the Boatassin river was a canoe from the Orochon village of New Val, and our hosts, the prospectors, getting into this with a native to steer, challenged us to a race. It was Gilyak *versus* European, and I doubt if the five versts across Chaivo Bay, from the mouth of the Boatassin to the village of New Val, have ever been covered in faster time. The tide had turned, and it was with considerable difficulty that the less shallow channels were found and navigated; but this accomplished, all put their backs into the work. There were no crowds of spectators watching the great struggle between Europe and Asia, none of the old familiar shouts from the tow-path, with all manner of musical (?) instruments, nor the well-known cries from the "coach," nor the hoarse, "One—two—three" of the cox. Europe had a smaller canoe, no baggage, and a cox only, beside her two oarsmen; but she was handicapped with two oars only. Asia had a longer canoe, two passengers with six or seven puds of baggage, beside her cox and two oarsmen; but then she had two pairs of sculls going.

Our Gilyak crew entered into the fun with great

enthusiasm. We—that is, Asia—had got a start in clearing the network of channels, and managed to hold our own for half the race. Europe, however, came steadily on, hand over hand, until both were level. Then, taking advantage of their cox's knowledge of the approach to his village, they swept round and landed, while Asia's crew were still hesitating where to beach their boat.

After all, this is but an allegory of the racial struggle for existence between the native and the white man. The Gilyak on Sakhalin has had a lead by two or three centuries, but he has already been far outnumbered, and will surely die out with the further inroad of the European. The chief causes of the dying out of the natives is disease, the narrowing limits of their hunting-ground, the decay of the spirit of the race, and their inability to adapt themselves to another mode of living which is gradually but surely being forced upon them. The Government's attitude towards them is a "correct" one. It recognizes them as Russian subjects, interferes as little as possible with their scant organization, and prohibits the sale of intoxicants to them. What is really required now, but hardly to be expected from officials whose function is the safeguarding of criminals, is a patriarchal government which shall interest itself in the race and its changing conditions.

If there were more friends of the Gilyaks like Mr. Pilsudski, who was a political exile on the island, they indeed might yet be saved from extinction. He recognized that their means of livelihood, hunting and fishing, were beginning to fail them, and therefore endeavoured to induce those who dwelt near the Russian settlements to cultivate potatoes and to salt fish. To the natives utterly unused to it, the work was extraordinarily exhausting; and one gave it up after two hours because "his back ached," while others eagerly sought permission to eat the seed potatoes! I fear, unaided and not followed up,

his efforts have failed, though after a great amount of persuasion he got several puds sown.

After being welcomed by the *starosta* of New Val, and introduced to the "belles" of the Orochons, whose rare beauty left much to be desired in our humble and uneducated opinion; we were ushered into a hut where not only were fish-skins spread for us, but to our surprise two pieces of handsome Chinese silk brocade. To tread with our great dirty boots upon these was out of the question, so, turning up a corner, we sank on to the fish-skins beneath. I leave the reader to picture the oddness of the contrast between pale blue and gold brocade and smoked fish, greasy timbers, and dirt-encrusted forms around.

The explanation of its presence here was a prospective Russian church, of which this was intended to be the altar-cloth. Very prospective, I should imagine. It was said that a Russian priest had visited Chaivo Bay four years previously, and had collected 489 rubles for the building of the church, but, so far, they had nothing but a handbell. I believe Sakhalin has been rid of the presence of this pope, whose true mission, by all accounts, appeared to have been to gather sable-skins. A priest comes once a year in winter during the hunting season, to a central spot of the island, generally Ado Tim (about 250 miles distant by river), and word is sent to the headmen of the Orochons. Of those who respond, some receive the Communion, or hear the Burial Service read for members of the family deceased during the previous year. The summons, however, is not liked, since, as is the custom in the Russian Church, the rites must be paid for, and the Orochons find themselves relieved of many sable-skins.

Russians declared to me that the priest brought vodka and traded for skins. The accusation, I fear, was true; and the excuse that he was poorly paid, a very lame one in extenuation of a crime punishable by law. Of course he was not alone in yielding to the temptation to use such

an unfailing key to riches as bartering vodka with the natives.

That no interest should have been taken by the priests in the natives, other than for the sake of gain, is most regrettable; but in judging them we must remember that they are not missionaries, nor even parish priests, but practically in the position of prison or military chaplains. It would be as reasonable to blame the chaplain of a regiment stationed, say, at Bombay, for not doing missionary work in India, as these priests in Sakhalin. As for their relation to their own flock, we shall see something of that when we come to my stay at Alexandrovsk.

Leaving the Orochon village of New Val, we rowed over in a south-easterly direction to the Gilyak settlement of Chaivo, situated on the northern side of the strait which here gives entrance to the sea. This was a village of some size, for there were about thirty canoes drawn up on the beach, and the population was said to number about a hundred. Landing here, we were taken to see the bear in its cage, two captive foxes, which were being bred for their skins, and three large white-tailed eagles tethered to corners of a log structure. Magnificent birds they were, whose great powerful wings and formidable beaks looked as if they should have won them freedom ere this. They had been captured when young, and were the contents of a nest robbed after the mother bird had been shot. The natives were rearing them with a view to selling their tails to the Japanese.

From the first meeting with the Gilyaks I had made inquiries as to where I could find a *cham*, or "medicine-man" of the tribe. I was anxious to do so, because I hoped to learn from him more than I could from the Gilyak "man-in-the-street," or rather, "man-in-the-canoe." All the replies had indicated the village of Chaivo as the residence of their *cham*. On reaching New Val, which was close by, I thought it prudent to make inquiries if

the great man were at home. The answer was in the affirmative. Arrived at Chaivo, however, I was informed he had gone to New Val. This would not do. I suspected evasion, and therefore put my foot down and insisted on our crew going to fetch him. This had the desired effect, and, shortly after, a man of about thirty or thirty-five, of less wild appearance than the others—in fact, a rather mild-looking individual—came hesitatingly towards us. I offered him a few tobacco-leaves, and to disarm his suspicions, for the natives are shy of talking about their religion, explained through the interpreters that I was a friend of the Gilyaks, and that I had come a great way from over the sea and would like to know about them and their forefathers.

The traveller, in his wanderings, too soon loses the novelty and strangeness of his environment, and it is seldom after the first blush that he does not take things as they come, without surprise. It is a useful habit, and saves much trouble, but there are occasions when he is transported in thought to his home and friends, and awakens with a shock to his present surroundings. It was such a moment now, this meeting with the Gilyak *cham*, and perhaps in giving the scene as it appealed to me, I may succeed in transporting the reader for one moment to that far-away spot.

It was evening, and we were squatted on the sand-dune dividing the bay before us from the Pacific, which was rolling in its great booming breakers hard by. A glorious sunset met our gaze westward, angry masses of black cloud were fired by reddening rays as they gathered behind the distant blue mountains, between which and us stretched vast forests. It was a Sunday evening, and calm as an English village scene, but yet how different. By what a gulf were we separated from the civilized world. Between us and England lay impenetrable forests, the home of the bear, and the escaped convict armed and

"OUR SUPPER OF FISH WAS SPITTED BEFORE THE FIRE." [*To face page* 233.

desperate with starvation. Only by days and days of punting up rapids could these forests be passed, followed by weeks before the mainland could be reached, and then there remained the whole of snow-bound Siberia to be crossed. Around us were squatted swarthy natives, pig-tailed and unwashed, women and children strangely clad, adorned with hoops in their ears and fish-knives at their belts. Our supper of fish was spitted before the fire. The strange figures gathered closer round us, dogs as well, as we talked of the Gilyak ancestors, the gods of their fathers, and the home of their departed ones; they wondering the while why the white men from a strange land should want to know these things. Could we be ignorant of what was common knowledge, or were we laughing at them?

After preliminary politenesses, I began by asking the *cham*—

"Has your father, or your father's father, ever told you anything about the place whence the earliest Gilyaks came?"

"No. They came from over there," pointing to the west, to the mainland, which we know by tradition to have been their home. But before he would answer my question, he had asked me—

"How is it the Russians have come here, and why do they live in big villages and not in the forest?"

What a revelation of a totally different economic world was here! Surely a question suitable for the new Economic Tripos at Cambridge.

The complexity of our economic life, the interdependence of country upon country—nay, hemisphere upon hemisphere—the vast network of communication in the civilized world upon which it was based, how could I, in a few words, make this member of a primitive tribe understand?

These "children of the forest," who found their food, their clothing, their homes, even their gods provided

therein, how was it possible for them to conceive of any other conditions of existence? Tradition even claimed that the Orochons had sprung from a male and female birch tree.

"How could we live together in towns, and yet manage to catch enough fish in the neighbourhood for the winter's store; and shoot sufficient animals to provide the skins wherein to clothe ourselves?"

I leave the reader to fill up the picture, and imagine the respectable citizens of London, clad in skins, streaming forth to St. John's Wood, to hunt the bear and reindeer, or, deftly balanced on the prows of their dug-out canoes, spearing salmon and harpooning seals in the "pellucid waters" of the Thames at London Bridge.

I put many questions to the *cham*, but they were scarcely answered satisfactorily; either he was not as intelligent as we had hoped, or else, for fear of being laughed at, he was beating about the bush. The Gilyaks themselves declared, "We have no great *cham* now. We had one. He died last winter. He was great indeed! If a man wanted to fish, and there was no wind to drive in the fish, he went to the *cham* and fell on his knees, and immediately his prayer was granted, and the wind began to blow." His successor, indeed, claimed the power of being able to locate a bear. "When the Gilyak wants to find one," he told us, "I hear a voice of the spirit, saying, 'There is a bear in the forest,' and I go into the forest, and there I discover a bear."

The *cham* of the Gilyaks resembles, in many respects, the *shaman* of the Oroktis, the Golds, and the Tungus on the mainland. Both are addicted to superstitious practices; but the primary function of the *cham* would appear to be the judicial executive, and for that purpose he is elected. He it is who pronounces sentence in the criminal "court" of elders, and afterwards carries it out. Legally these were the limits of his function; but

A TUNGUS "SHAMAN." [*To face page* 235.

actually his moral influence does not stop there, and the criminal's fate largely depends upon him. Probably he was chosen because the death of a murderer, though necessary in olden times, was much against the grain of the kindly, jolly Gilyaks; and the *cham*, with his powers of exorcism, could clear himself of any sin which they involuntarily felt must attach to the killing of a human being. The penalty of death now no longer obtains, but is commuted in practice to a fine.

The *shaman*, on the other hand, is not chosen, but wins his position by force of character and in face of no little ridicule. If he succeeds, he becomes the Oracle of the tribe. To him come those who want to know where a lost article is to be found, what the catch of fish will be next season, or how to avoid impending misfortune. But it is as a healer of sickness and exorciser of evil spirits that he is in most request. Mr. V. P. Margaritov, in a monograph on the Oroktis (translated by Mr. M. F. A. Fraser*), has given a vivid description of the performance of a *shaman* in the district of the Primorsk. He first proceeded to dress himself in the style of my illustration. A petticoat was tied round his waist, and from this depended a remarkable collection of "mineral wealth," in the shape of metal bells, steels (flint and steel), metal discs, chains, portions of tin pots, and scraps of iron. The dress that I saw seemed to me to represent a collection of curios, from the point of view of the Orokti, in the amassing of which civilized countries—chiefly England, and Birmingham for preference—had been ransacked for their domestic utensils. The head-dress consisted of the antler of a deer, and depending from it again bells, rings, and plates of metal and rags. In fact, I could not better describe the *shaman*, so arrayed, than as a peripatetic kitchen-midden. Having burnt grass in his hut until there was a stifling, blinding smoke, he took a reindeer-skin

* *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, China Branch, 1894.

tambourine in his hand, and, going to the entrance, announced the *shaman* fit. Then he began howling, emitting mysterious noises, whirling wildly round the smoke-filled hut, beating the tambourine and himself, until, exhausted by this maniacal conduct, he hurled himself on the couch. The awed onlookers then awaited with expectation the revelation on the following day.

Being anxious to know what claims the *cham* had to healing power, I asked him whether he could cure illnesses. To which he replied, "If a child or person is ill, I, the *cham*, pray and make offerings of tobacco to the lord of fire and cast some rice or tea out of the door to the spirits (of the forest and water). There is one god—Nature," he added, "and we offer to fire at one time and to water and the forest at others." But the whole ceremony of a cure is well worth a description.

If a Gilyak is so ill that all domestic resources fail, then the *cham* is sent for. He arrives, followed by one of the elder representatives of the hut, who has been told off to show honour and courtesy to the healer. An inspection of the patient is generally sufficient for him to determine whether the sufferer will recover or no; but before he decides upon his measures, the *cham* tries to find out from the relatives what the patient has been doing prior to his illness. Then he tells them that the evil spirit is angry with the sick man, and has sent this illness as a punishment; but he will speak to the spirit about it, and ask him how his anger may be appeased. Nothing, however, can be done before the evening, for the element in which the spirit lives is the night.

When the sun has set, the *cham* appears, and drives out of the hut all unnecessary persons, and proceeds to place upon his head a band of birch bark, with three little rustling rosettes of papery bark lining. These, it is said, are to aid him in the expulsion of the evil spirit from the sick one; but are more probably to enhance the mystery

and authority of the exorcist. He then places in the corner of the hearth three little bowls, containing respectively fish, tobacco, and roots; and close to these, two wooden images, *ch'khnai*, bound together back to back; one having the face of a laughing man, and the other that of a weeping woman. The *ch'khnai* are there to provide something for the evil spirit to enter, when he leaves the body of the sick man. Note here how clever the *cham* is. He so places the *ch'khnai* that the image of the weeping woman faces the cups containing the food; and the evil spirit, summoned from the body of the patient by exorcism and attracted by delicacies, naturally enters into the image so placed; and, having taken this form, will be himself kind-hearted and weak as a weeping woman. The good spirit is then exorcised, and takes refuge in the other image; where he becomes jolly and strong as a laughing man, especially when the *cham* draws nearer to him one of the bowls of food.

The evil and good spirits finding themselves in close proximity, begin to fight; but there is never any doubt of the result, for victory must be to the stronger—the good spirit. Then commence negotiations between the *cham* and the evil spirit as to how much or what offering he will accept to keep away from the sick man.

During all these exorcisms and negotiations the hut has been the scene of an awe-inspiring spectacle. While the sick man lay on the *nakh*, or bench, the *cham* has been whirling round the hut, beating the *kos-cha*, a fish-skin tambourine, uttering all manner of strange sounds, and quickening his wild gyrations in order to prevent the escape of the evil spirit from his reach. By the time of the combat of the good and evil spirits, the wild dance has reached its climax; and when negotiations commence, the *cham* is in an ecstatic state. His exorcisms are begun in almost a whisper, and to the slow-measured strokes of the tambourine. He improvises his prayers, conforming

them to the circumstances; and by degrees working himself into an ecstasy, he babbles with hoarse voice, howls, and even shrieks. From the great strain his voice sometimes cracks; but he draws off attention, and with amazing dexterity whirls around in the semi-darkness, his feet appearing to leave the ground as his wild circlings in the air increase and the flames leap in answering flickerings to his wild springings. Black shadows fitfully race over the walls of the hut, and quicker and quicker grow the wild howls and the thuds of the tambourine. The hearts of the spectators sink with fright, and even the most sceptical of the Gilyaks is involuntarily bewitched.

The eyes of the *cham* are like flames; he foams at the mouth, and sings the orders of the evil spirit—

"Take two great dogs,
One black,
The other white;
Kill these two offerings
There,
Where is kept the bear;
That will make the sick man well."

The first syllable in each line is articulated quickly, and the last vowels in the line slowly, merging into a howl.*

If the *cham* is angry with the sick man, or has any spite against him or his relatives, he may ruin the whole family by his interpretation of the spirit's demands, forcing them to bring all their dogs and everything that they value most. It is even said that in olden times human offerings were demanded.

On the following day, the head of the hut takes the offerings, and goes as quickly as possible to the village appointed where the bear is, even if it be a hundred miles away. There he kills the dogs near the cage of the bear, takes out the heart and liver and casts them in the forest to the east, and sings, "Make so that the sick man may

* Each line in the Gilyak original is made to end in *a—aa*.

be quite well." The offering is made near the bear because the evil spirit is a great friend of the bear, and therefore is to be found near at hand.

The *cham* having been liberally rewarded for his pains, the matter is ended.

One old Gilyak in reply to my question as to what happened if the patient died, said, with stoical submissiveness, "We make offerings, and if the child recovers, it is well; but if the spirit does not restore it, it is well also."

The Gilyaks explain the visitation of disease in this way. The sick man must have offended the good spirit *kiskh*, who thereupon deserts him and leaves him in the power of the evil spirit. The offering made to the latter is a bribe, whereby the sufferer coaxes the evil spirit to quit him.

The Gilyak makes no offering to *kiskh*, the creator, the great spirit, the god of the moral world, for he does not know where he is; in fact, so vague is his notion of him that it can only be said to exist in his mind as a nebulous conception. With regard to the position of the *cham*, the evil spirit cannot but be angry at the trick he has been played, and the want of respect paid to him; but we need not be anxious for the healer, since he is secure in his knowledge of many exorcisms.

His moral influence among his tribe is certainly losing ground, as the Gilyaks come more into contact with the Russians. One of them said to a Russian, "A *cham* tells very many lies."

"Then why do you call him in?"

"He is needed. If he got angry it would be bad for us," was the answer.

It is true that it may result badly for the Gilyak, not because the *cham* can cause the divine anger to fall upon his head; but when the Gilyak has a misunderstanding, or is accused of crime, the *cham* may remember his

omission or insult, and as he has the last word, he can make the punishment very severe.

Among the group of strange folk squatted on the beach by the fading light of the day, was a particularly intelligent elder, who had evidently seen more of the Russians than any of the others. He had overheard the first question which I had put to the *cham* about the home of his forefathers, and in an impressive way he exclaimed, "How can I tell? Neither my father nor my father's father could write, and therefore they have left me no writing to tell, and even if they had, I cannot read; hence how can you expect me to know?"

The Gilyaks have no written language, but they have a legend to account for the want of it. I learnt it from one of their number, Imdin by name, the only Sakhalin Gilyak known to have been brought up and educated by the Russians. He is an intelligent youth, and had been sent to a school at Vladivostok, where I met him in the charge of a political exile, to whom he owed nearly everything.

"The legend current among my tribe," he said, with a smile, "tells how a Gilyak and a Chinaman were talking together one day on the shore. The former was showing his books and letters (characters) to the latter, when most unfortunately a great wind arose, and blew away all the letters save five; and to complete this great catastrophe, when the Gilyak's back was turned the Chinaman meanly made off with the small remnant."

The Ainus have a not dissimilar legend, in which, according to one version, their letters and records were stolen by their guest from Japan, while they were yet recovering from after-dinner effects. Dr. Laufer* gives the Gilyak legend in another form. He says, "The first living man and his wife had forty-seven sons and forty-seven daughters. The forty-seven sons married their

* *American Anthropologist*, April to June, 1900.

sisters. The legend runs that they once received some white paper from the god Taighan,* and so were able to write. One day when they returned home from hunting, they could not understand one another, and talked in forty-seven different languages. Seven of the brothers remained in the country; the other forty built canoes and sailed out beyond the sea, carrying along the papers containing their records. On the way they were separated, and twenty of them encountered a heavy rain-storm, in which their papers got wet. After a long trip these twenty reached the shore. They prepared a meal, and spread the papers out on the beach to dry, but suddenly it began to thunder and lighten, and sad to relate their annals were utterly destroyed. The Gilyaks and Tungusian tribes are the descendants of those brothers who lost their papers and forgot the art of writing. The other twenty brothers, favoured by good weather, brought their written treasures safely into a new country, and became the ancestors of the Chinese and Japanese, who are still able to write."

"This tradition," adds Dr. Laufer, "points to the fact that the Gilyaks regard themselves as closely related to the Tungusians, and also the Chinese and Japanese."

Our talk then drifted on to the passing of mortals into the next world, and the elder made a rather remarkable statement; but I was not sure then, nor am I now, as to how much of the form of it was due to the interpreter, who in this case was unfortunately not Mr. X., on whose accuracy and appreciation of the points raised, I could always depend.

He said, "When a man dies, he does not change. He has ears, eyes, nose, hands, and heart just as before, and only his spirit is missing. If this were to come back the man would be alive. Therefore, I believe the spirit lives,

* Perhaps by this is meant the god of the *taiga*, *i.e. Pal ni vookh.*

if not here then elsewhere. I expect to see my father, but where I cannot say." Our "captain" Yungkin declared that when his father died his grandfather came in the fire and took him, and Yungkin waited in expectation of his father coming for him in the same way. A pretty touch, and a belief with no small power of consolation.

In talking of their departed, they never called them by their name. That would be *uich, i.e.* unlucky, ill-omened. Filial piety as among the Chinese is a cardinal virtue, and the elder before us was no exception to the rule. He had killed no less than ten dogs at his father's funeral pyre, his father being a well-to-do man, and therefore it was necessary for his spirit to travel with an honourable *cortège* in the next world.

If a Gilyak dies in the winter, it is usual to wrap the body in bark and keep it, which is an easy matter in this frost-bound world, until the breaking up of winter, when the ceremonies may more easily be carried out.

Let me describe, first, the rites observed on the death of a woman, premising that with this, as with many other of the more curious customs I describe, there is a difference in detail among tribes (of Gilyaks), and even between one *khal* (clan) and another. Where the *khal* has been much influenced by Russian contact there is considerable modification. With some of the latter, such is the influence of example that the natives are giving up cremation for burial.

Four garments—short-skirted frocks—are placed upon the corpse of the woman. Only the best may be selected, and in case of a "wealthy" Gilyak the rare Chinese brocade, I have mentioned, will be used. Over all the corpse is robed in a *shuba.* The reason of the four garments is this. The spirit of the dead woman must appear before each of the gods or lords in turn, *Tol ni vookh,* the

lord of the water (sea and rivers); *Pal ni vookh*, the lord of the forest; *Tur ni vookh*, the lord of fire; and *Kiskh*, the judge of good and evil; and as her duty on earth was to keep the hearth, *i.e.* look after the fire, so *Tur ni vookh* is her most intimate deity. Since she must appear before each one, and the road is long and difficult, four dresses are necessary, as one only suffices for a journey, and she must not appear before the god in torn garments. Of course, if the family of the deceased is poor, the god will overlook that little want of delicacy; but woe to the light-minded members of a rich family, if they omit to place four garments on their dead. She and her kindred will indeed have a bad time; her life in the next world will be poverty-stricken even as she has shown herself in miserable condition, and her kindred will suffer many misfortunes from the hands of those gods whose majesty has been insulted.

For four days the corpse of the dead woman lies on the *nakh* of the hut, and during this time her soul pays visits to the four gods, renders an account of her earthly life, and receives instructions for the life after death. All her kindred must come together and not leave the hut during this period, and with all their powers they strive to call to mind and loudly recite all the virtues of their deceased kinswoman. This is done in order to prompt her spirit, lest her etherealized self should omit some of them in its *vivâ voce*. The lord of fire, as the junior god, serves in this case as messenger, and is therefore strictly kept going in all his force.

Crying and loud talking fill the hut. The mourners loose their hair from the pigtails, and all vie with each other in showing their abandonment of pleasure. Luxuries are eschewed, pipes are broken in pieces, and the tobacco is allowed to fall out.

If the deceased be a man, similar ceremonies are gone through, but as he is not the maintainer of the hearth, he

has to give an account of his doings to three gods only; and therefore his body requires only three garments, and lies in the hut but three days. As with the woman, over the other garments is worn a *shuba;* for their spirits have not yet gained that supernatural capacity which defies the elements, and warm raiment is necessary on their long journeys.

At the end of the lying-in-state, *i.e.* on the fifth day for the woman and on the fourth for the man, the corpse is taken out of the hut and laid on a *narta*, a sledge drawn by a team of dogs. The *shuba* is taken off, for although the soul has not yet its divine faculties, the journeys have been made, and it is no longer needed. These are now to be gained by purification.

At this juncture some of the followers leave the crowd and run quickly to the cemetery, which every village possesses in the secluded depths of the forest, in a spot quite impossible for a stranger to find. There on a site chosen by the family, a funeral pyre is built of cleanly stripped sticks of the height of a man. It is of diamond shape, with the ends of the sticks projecting, and eight layers in height. On the top are more dried sticks, moss, twigs, and larch chips. At a few feet from the pyre these friends of the family hastily construct with planks of wood a little hut-like building called a *raff*, about two and a half feet long, broad and high, with a sloping roof. This little structure has a hole in the side, or a little door, which looks towards the pyre. Great haste has to be made, for they are anxious to finish their work before the procession arrives, and therefore they use material which has been prepared by the friends of the dead beforehand.

To erect the *raff* for the reception of the soul of the deceased before the divine sanction has been given would be an insult to the gods; therefore the followers wait until the *cortège* is about to start. The journeys to the gods

have been duly made, and the soul is now ready, and only awaits the purification by fire, which shall assure to it divine capacities.

The *cortège* is followed by a crowd of kindred and acquaintances, with dishevelled hair, loudly crying and weeping tears of sincerity or convention. They vie with each other in enumerating the virtues of their dead comrade, hoping thereby to gain his protection.

The corpse is placed on the pyre ready for cremation, and all is now ready save the fire, which must be procured in a special manner. In memory of the earliest traditional methods of obtaining it, flint and steel may not be used, nor of course the Russian, or rather Japanese, matches. A pointed stick is inserted in a hole made in a piece of plank placed on the ground. Four men take each an end of a thong attached to and twisted round the stick, and pull it. This rotates, generates friction, and ignites the dried tinder placed in close proximity. The top of the stick is steadied by pressing on it a flat piece of wood, or if need be a Gilyak applies his chest. Torches are lighted, and fire is applied to the pyre, first by the widow, if the deceased leave one.

As the flames lick up the pyre, the soul takes refuge in the *raff* through the hole or opened door, thence to emerge later and begin its long journey to that other world village of *Mligh-vo*, which the Amur Gilyaks say is in the centre of the earth, but the Sakhalin Tro and Tim Gilyaks say is "There"—pointing to the east—"where the sun rises."

Since it is necessary that the spirit of the deceased shall travel as he was accustomed on earth, the spirits of the dogs, the sledge, etc., must all be released. The dogs, in number according to the wealth of the departed, are all killed, being strangled or beaten to death. The sledge is broken, and so are also his spear (*kakh*), his bow (*punch*), and his arrows (*ku*), and quiver (*kh'm*), or if the deceased

be a woman, then her ear-rings (*mestch*), rings (*koi-ba*), and her fish-knife (*ungu-dzhakho*). All these articles will be needed by the deceased in the future life; but they must be broken in order to finish their earthly existence, and to give release to their spirits. Every object has its soul, which resembles it. This is set free in the case of inanimate objects only on being broken, and is then used by the soul of the deceased. To burn them is not to be thought of, because they cannot have that honour done them.

Camping out on the banks of the river Tim in the forest, we were casting around one night for fuel, when Mr. X. came upon a bit of shaped board which he was about to throw on the fire, when Vanka stopped him, crying out, "No, no! *Uich, uich!* It is a piece of a Gilyak canoe." Purification by fire is reserved only for the human being. The dogs are not shot, nor are their throats cut, for if any of them had his skin broken he would appear in the next world with this grave personal defect.

The ashes of the cremated corpse are gathered together and put into a coffin-like box (*paff*), and buried on the site of the fire. Sometimes, as on the mainland, the ashes are buried beneath a hole in the floor of the *raff*. A stick with pieces of the garments of the deceased is stuck into the ground by the *raff*, and serves apparently as memorial to the kindred, and perhaps as a landmark for the return of the soul of the departed.

In front of the hole or door of the *raff* are raised two poles and a cross-piece, an erection resembling a miniature goal-post, and on the cross-bar are hung all manner of provisions, tobacco, etc., for the use of the soul of the deceased on its long journey. I have two wooden boxes—one cylindrical and the other rectangular in shape, interestingly carved with scroll pattern, albeit very smelly—which originally hung at such a grave,

containing rice, fish, etc., and a pair of wooden chop-sticks. All these provisions are covered with pieces of bark to protect them from the ravages of birds and wild animals.

CHAPTER XIV

NIVO

The powerful *Tol ni vookh*—Avi fauna—The great sea-holiday—The Black Killer—Fish in "posts"—The Grand Old Beggar—A "great city"—The "Lord Mayor"—Polygamy—An elopement—Gilyak maiden's song—A scorned lover—Curious marriage ceremony—Causes of the decrease of the Gilyaks.

MENTION has been made of four gods—the lords of the forest, sea, and fire, and the creator, or judge of right and wrong; but these do not exhaust the whole polytheistic conception of the Gilyak. They are his nearest protectors, the most intimate among a crowd who are too numerous to maintain communications with. The sun, moon, and stars each has its *ni vookh*, but the Gilyak has no intercourse with them.

All the four gods are Gilyaks, have wives, wear Gilyak garments, and have much in common with men; in fact, they are the Greek gods in Gilyak dress. How strong is the belief of the Gilyak in the existence of his gods the following talk will show. It is also an illustration of the subtlety needed in questioning a native about his religion, the mysteries of which he is, as a rule, so reluctant to disclose. A Russian asked—

"How do the Gilyaks catch fish? and why at one time do they catch more, at another time less, and at another none at all?"

Gilyak. Well, at one time the fish come into the net and at another time not.

Russian. That is not the reason. How can a fish go by itself into the net? It would never enter of its own accord into the net. You Gilyaks know that it is God who sends it there, the God who has created everything and lives in the sky.

Gilyak. No, it is you Russians who don't know. How can a god who lives in the sky send into the net the fish which live in the water? No, not in the sky lives the god, but in the water. He, the god in the water, has created nothing, and only commands the fish, and where he wishes, there he sends them.

Russian. What sort of a god can there be in the water? If he is a Gilyak, he will drown. There of course he is not, and the Gilyaks only think so in their stupidity!

Gilyak. It is untrue. All is untrue what you are saying. The Gilyak knows very well. Myself knows. There are such (striking) things have happened. A Gilyak was drowned in his clothes; but afterwards he was found on the bank without clothes. How do you think that came about?

Russian. I don't know. Perhaps somebody robbed him.

Gilyak. Hey! *Kaukray!* Nobody had robbed him. You yourself don't know. *It was done by Tol ni vookh, kiskh!*

Russian. Then why has he done it?

Gilyak. Because the Gilyak offended him in something, therefore the god has drowned him, and his garments he has taken for himself, and the naked corpse he has cast on the shore so that all should know that this Gilyak had offended the god. May all be frightened to offend the powerful *Tol ni vookh.*

Our conversation with the *cham* and the native elder on matters terrestrial and celestial had to be cut short, as our "captain" had for some time past been impatient to start. We had once more to navigate the narrow and

shallow passage among the sand-dunes and banks which connects the bays of Chaivo and Ni. This could only be done at high water at night, and there was but one tide in twenty-four hours, hence Yungkin's importunity. Darkness came on, and muffling ourselves in furs, we lay down as best we could in our frail craft, dozing to the sound of the lap, lap of the waters. For six hours our natives rowed on, until at midnight, when we had sunk into a sound sleep, there came a rude awakening. The shallowest part of the passage was overpast, rain had begun to descend, and there was no alternative but to camp. Yawning and stretching we clambered ashore and stamped down the coarse rushes. To be suddenly disturbed from a sound sleep and plunged into the discomforts of camping in the rain on a desolate sandbank was, to say the least, trying to the temper, and we discreetly indulged in "profane silence."

Fuel was found with difficulty, and a fire started. We had still a modicum of fresh water with us and some brick-tea; and were raising our spirits with the "cup that cheers but does not inebriate," when the plash of a paddle sounded in our ears.

We had scarcely reached for our guns when Yungkin announced Gilyaks. A party were returning to Chaivo, and seeing our fire had stopped for a warm, a pipe, and some tea. They joined us around the cheerful blaze, talking volubly, and taking some pleasure in pointing out to us one of their number, who, they said, had a devil in him. He was an idiot, one glance at his face was sufficient to determine that, and without showing any violence continued to make the strangest contortions. His presence completed the weirdness of the scene, this group of uncouth figures of a primitive people crouched round a fire on a desolate island on a wild night. The madman, who was known as "Oto," lived in one of two huts which are on the opposite side of the Strait of Chaivo. He was not

allowed to work, but his comrades supplied all his wants, for they regarded him as a kind of sacred person singled out or set apart by the unseen powers. He was not, however, permitted to have a wife.

The party departed as suddenly as they came, and we were left to wrestle unsuccessfully with the elements through the night, for the rain persisted in finding its way through our poor shelter. The morning brought no cheerier prospect, but by 11 o'clock, the rain showing signs of abating its ardour, we once more prepared to embark.

The sandy flats and curving shores of the Bay of Ni were alive with hundreds of sea-birds. The commonest, and most frightened at our approach, were the gulls (*Larus canus niveus*), which winter in Japan. Much bolder were the sandpipers, of which the common (*Totanus hypoleucus*), the green (*T. ochropus*), the wood (*T. glareola*), and the terek species (*T. terekia*) have been shot in the bay, as well as the redshank (*T. calidris*). Related to these, but earlier in migration, for it is said that they winter in Australia, are the stint (*Tringa subminuta*) and his red-throated brother (*T. ruficollis*), the dunlin (*T. cinclus*) and the eastern knot (*T. crassirostris*). These had made their departure, but what drew my particular attention was the handsome orange-footed oyster-catcher (*Hæmatopus osculans*) and the turnstone (*Strepsilas interpres*). In our forage for food we had shot one or two common snipe (*Scolopax gallinago*), which was much more in evidence than the pintail variety (*S. stenura*). The terns (*Sterna Kamchatica* and *Aleutia*) had not yet departed, and though the goosander (*Mergus merganser*) and the smew (*Mergellus albellus*) were not observable, I saw specimens of these which had been taken at the mouth of the Tim.

This was a long day .for our oarsmen, who continued, with only the intervals of landing at a village or two, until 9 o'clock at night. At one of these I was just in time

to take a snapshot of a family leaving in their canoe to make an afternoon call, in other words, to borrow some seal-oil and take a cup of (brick) tea. On the gunwale of the canoe will be noticed what appears to be an outrigger, but is really a **Y**-piece for resting the seal harpoon in. This *cham-gash*, which is the name the Gilyaks give the harpoon, is used on the ice or manipulated from a canoe. The sea on the east coast here is frozen in winter for two to four versts out, and when this breaks up the great seal-hunt commences. The great field of operations is, however, in the Straits of Tartary, opposite the mouth of the Amur, and a busy scene it is.

Winter has long reigned over the land. The snow-covered *taiga*, the frozen rivers, and ice-bound sea, have been for six or seven months the only outlook. At length with spring comes the wind from the mountains driving the ice-floes out to sea. Then the Gilyak awaits with patience the change in the wind, for he knows that this time the ice-floes will be driven shorewards, not empty, but laden with many a passenger. In a good year in the Straits of Tartary a thousand seals (*Phoca vitulina*, Gilyak, *langerr*) will lie upon the ice sunning themselves, unconscious of any danger.

On shore preparations are being made for the *Chak vi hŭnch*, or *Tol vi hŭnch*, *i.e.* the water or sea holiday; for this is the inauguration of the *tolf-an*, or summer year.

Wild men, with raven pigtails and high cheek-bones, are bustling about at the mouths of the rivers preparing to receive the unsuspecting guests. Last year's provisions are all consumed, and the Gilyaks await with suppressed excitement the approach of their fat lazy visitors. The wind from the sea increases in vehemence, ice-floes seen on the horizon are being driven closer and closer to the shore. Now they are quite near, forming great glistening fields. The whole Gilyak village is alive, the inhabitants running about on the swaying white floor quickly taking up

SETTING OUT FOR AN AFTERNOON CALL.

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positions, concealing themselves behind the bergs. Each one has in his hand a harpoon similar to the fish-spear already described on a larger scale. The pole consists of five lengths jointed, each 7 metres long, and is therefore at full length about 135 feet. The end, to which the harpoon is attached by a thong, is ski-shaped, with its end bent upwards, the better to thrust into the side of the seal. The thong itself is also 135 feet long, to allow the seal sufficient play. This great length of weapon enables the Gilyak to harpoon his unsuspecting prey at a considerable distance. He stealthily approaches his victim, taking cover behind the bergs, and placing the harpoon on the ice slowly unwinds the thong. By a quick thrust the animal is speared, and flings himself frightened into the water. In so doing he frees the head of the harpoon from the shaft, to which, however, he is now held by the thong. His efforts to get away only serve to give the harpoon a firmer grip, and the poor animal is hauled in and killed by a blow on the head.

The first catch is collected and left on the shore. To take it to their huts to be devoured there would be a graceless, greedy thing to do, for there is as yet no divine sanction to the domestic use of them. Such a proceeding might result in a failure of the seal season, owing to the god's anger. No ; the feasting must be done openly, and, though at some inconvenience, in full view of the god's province.

On the bank, therefore, fires are kindled ; and the flesh of the seals is cooked, and with it is hashed up anything left over from the winter's stores. When all is prepared the feasting commences, and lasts all day. Eating and drinking go on, not only on the banks, but in the huts ; at the same time it is strictly observed that the pieces of the newly caught seals shall not be brought within the hut, nor left scattered about, nor even the blood spilled. If the god has allowed seals to be caught, he has

permitted them to be consumed only on his premises, *i.e.* the banks. By this courtesy and little attention on the part of the Gilyaks, *Tol ni vookh* will be content, and in future will send them abundance of seals and all manner of inhabitants of the sea.

It often happens that by the time of the arrival of the seals, the winter stores are quite exhausted, and hunger reigns in the village; nevertheless, the fête must be celebrated with all due ceremony. On the following day the whole village turns out, and the family groups begin to gather up the "fragments," including the bones, which, in deep silence and reverence, are cast into the sea. The flesh and fat, boiled or roasted, for the god has plenty of raw, are offerings to *Tol ni vookh*, with the request that he will give them permission to use the products of his domain, the sea; and the bones are the thank-offering in acknowledgment of the god's goodwill in sending the seals and allowing the Gilyaks to open the New Year's fête with the due and proper ceremonies. With these bones the great *Tol ni vookh* will make many more seals. It would be a sin to scatter the bones to the four winds, thus making it more difficult to create for want of material. *Tol ni vookh* would in that case have to recreate entirely, whereas, given the bones, he has only to reclothe them with flesh, and lo, the seals are complete, alive!

The offering is cast into the sea in complete silence, because there are many *Uichkha rush*, or water *daimones*, who, if they should overhear the Gilyak praying, would spoil the whole affair, by seizing what was intended for the god.

After the day of the offering, the Gilyak is free to follow up the hunt, and so successful is he with his harpoon that a canoe of five will sometimes take as many as fifty young seals, which will be equally divided among them. This continues until a south-west wind drives away the ice-floes and their passengers.

In autumn a few seals ascend the river, and these are shot by the natives. They follow in the wake of the *Salmo lagocephalus*, or are driven before the attack of the dreaded grampus, or black killer (*Orca atra*). This terrible enemy, the largest of the dolphin family, is armed with a formidable dorsal fin, which in the case of the *rectipinnia* species attains to the enormous length of six feet. Not content with smaller fry, these terrible wolves of the ocean will even attack a large whale, gathering round it and gashing its throat and lips, and finally hauling it to the bottom of the sea to rise thence with great pieces of its flesh in their maws. Even the fierce walrus will crawl upon the rocks with its young to be out of the way of these voracious creatures; and when larger prey, such as the smaller dolphins or seals are not to be had, salmon and smaller fish furnish a meal for this hungry animal.

Hence, before it are driven ashore and up the rivers the seals, salmon, smelt, trout, etc., upon which the Gilyak lives. It is, therefore, not unnatural that he should look upon the "sword dolphin," as the Germans call it, as a friend to whom he owes many a successful catch. The grampus never meets with a hostile reception from the natives, and if his lifeless carcase be cast up on shore, rightful honours are paid it.

It is otherwise with the white fish or white whale *Delphinapterus leucas*) which haunts the mouths of rivers; for his flesh provides a feast for the Gilyaks. From the skin, I believe, and certainly from that of the rarer seal (*Arctocephalus monteriensis*), thongs of several hundred feet are obtained by cutting it spirally. These are again cut into lengths of about 130 feet, and much prized for harpoons, dog harness, and straps generally.

In the autumn comes also another inhabitant of the ocean, the sea-lion (*Eumetopias Stelleri*). Gazing far out to sea, the Gilyak has seen a black point disappearing and

re-appearing, and then a second and a third. This is enough. He hastens to bring out his apparatus, his nets with their floats of burnt wood shaped like the heads of sea-lions. These he sets far away from shore, near great rocks, while he lurks in his canoe behind them, patiently awaiting results. A little wave breaks lazily on the shore, and ripples on the pebbles. The black floats are gently rocked, at one moment they appear on the crest, at the next in the trough of the wave. Who could doubt this to be a herd of sea-lions swimming near the pebbles? The midday sun has heated the surface of the water, and beckons the herd outside to a sun-bath on shore. Sighting these "comrades," who have preceded them in this intention, they swim towards them all unsuspectingly. But ere before the first has discovered the deception, he is entangled in the net, a canoe shoots rapidly from behind the rocks, and a skilful thrust quiets his fluttering for ever.

There are many other inhabitants of the sea and rivers which have interest for the Gilyak, especially the smaller kinds; and though to the cold current issuing from the Okhotsk Sea is due his severe winter, yet he owes to it the large schools of fish which arrive off the coast of Sakhalin. They come in such rapid sequence that the Russian fishermen say they come in "posts."

Fish being the staple article of food, the "bread" of the Gilyaks, the summer supply is necessarily of great importance to them. The winter stores of sun-dried *kita* are generally consumed by December, and then comes the hard time for them. Until the arrival of the seals in April there is only one other visitant. This is the haddock (*Gadus æglefinus*, or *Vachnya*), or in the Gilyak tongue, *kan-hi*. If one is sledging along the shore and gazes seaward, he will see black specks among the gleaming ice. They are the figures of men wrapped from head to foot in skins, and they are hooking haddock. In their

A GROUP OF TUNGUS. [*To face page* 257.

hands are sticks with big hooks attached, and the hungry and stupid fish coming to the hole made in the ice, and grabbing at the hook, is caught. By this means a man has been known to catch as many as 300 in a day.

After the seals arrive the herrings (*Clupea harengus*), and then the halibut (*Pleuronectes hippoglossus*), in Gilyak *pilencho*, which is caught from a boat with a large hook baited. The natives allow this powerful fish, which sometimes weighs over 100 lbs., to drag the boat until, its strength exhausted, they haul it in and spear it.

Trout (*Salmo fario*) appear now in the rivers, but not in large numbers, and the next big catch is of the ide * (*Idus melanotus*). A weir is formed in the river pointing up stream. Two lines of wattle are constructed so as to form an acute angle, and at the point of meeting is a large, long basket. The fish coming up stream find their way in, and a Gilyak sitting near the entrance all night beats with a mallet or oar, frightening them in and preventing them from returning. In the morning he fastens up the basket, and takes his catch ashore. The smelt (*Osmerus eperlanus*) appears in such quantities that it is caught with a hand-net, and simply ladled out of the water. The spearing of the *gorbusha* (*Salmo proteus*) and *kita* (*S. lagocephalus*), the most important fish of all to the natives, has already been described.

Re-embarking at the village whence the family had departed for seal-oil, we proceeded southwards for many hours. Moonlight was silvering the broadening Bay of Ni, and all was still and quiet, save for the passage of a solitary canoe of natives returning to their village. Later there passed another containing two men of a fresh tribe, the Tungus, whose language none of us understood. We mutually grunted salutations, though I never saw the Gilyaks greet each other, this being quite contrary to the

* The common ide (*Leuciscus idus*) is a species of roach (*Leuciscus rutilus*).

habits of their neighbours to the south, the Ainus, with whom the ceremony is both long and complicated.

The Tungus are the most nomadic race on Sakhalin, at the same time they are the best hunters, and probably the cleverest in carving, needlework, and metalwork. Their home is the *taiga*, and with their reindeer and fine hunting dogs are sometimes seen following the river course or the forest paths made by wild animals. Some of their dogs, I was told, would catch three sables in a day, which their masters would exchange at Derbensk for a pud of gunpowder and a pud of shot.

Between them and the Gilyaks there are occasional misunderstandings, and even the Orochons complain that the latter sometimes steal their reindeer, which in view of the dispersal of their herds in the forest is quite possible.

Neighbouring tribes are not in the habit of praising each other, and even the citizens of such civilized places as Tarascon and Beaucaire did not regard each other with affection, if we are to accept Daudet's testimony. In Mongolia, as you enter the territory of a fresh tribe, the people on learning that you have traversed the country of their neighbours, will congratulate you on your lucky escape from such a cut-throat race, while you have been previously warned in similar terms of your new acquaintances.

"The Tungus," said our Vanka, "are wild people living in the forest. They are not hospitable, and do not give the Gilyaks food and drink when they call;" and I believe what he said was in the main true.

The Gilyak expects and finds a welcome almost everywhere, since he has relations, members of his *khal*, at every other village. Hospitality is not a virtue, but an obligation, and few there are who take unfair advantage of it. The guest of to-day may be the host of to-morrow. Those who are too aged to hunt are supported by the exertions of the younger generation, and even they can slice and

AN UNRECORDED TRAGEDY (*see page* 227).

PILLANÜTSICH, OR THE "GRAND OLD BEGGAR."

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clean fish in the season. There was one notable exception to these old people, who did travel, and who having no relations nearer than the mainland went about begging. Of him the Gilyaks were very much ashamed, and I feel almost guilty of a breach of confidence in making public this skeleton in their cupboard. His proper name was *Poeikan*, but he can no longer be called by that, for he has disgraced it, and so he goes by the title *Pillanütsich*, or the "Grand Old Beggar."

That hospitality is not offered to the Gilyaks by the Tungus is not surprising, for their relations are considerably strained. The former accuse the latter of robbing their snares, and of setting them on the Gilyaks' hunting-grounds. They even declare that while it is dangerous to meet a *brodyaga* man to man, to meet a Tungus is certain death. Of course this is only true if there be cause of hostility.

The Tungus told Mr. Sternberg that they despised the Gilyaks and Orochons; and with true Pharisaical scorn added, "*We* are subjects of the Empire, and are baptized and christened, but the Gilyaks and Orochons eat dogs." It is true that the Gilyaks do eat their dogs, and even sables, when driven to it in winter by starvation.

It was already long past the hour for camping, but our "captain's" hopes were set on reaching Nivo. At about 8.30 p.m. we had passed the Strait of Ni and were opposite the spot where the Russian police-officer, now departed, had been encamped. As it was so late, I suggested we should stop here, but to my amusement Yungkin replied in broken Russian to the following effect, "Camp here! Why, Nivo is a great city (*balshoy gorod*), and there are many doubtful characters on the outskirts, Tungus, Orochons and Gilyaks, and they might kill you in the night." A half an hour later we drew up in front of the "great city" of Nivo, consisting of less than two dozen huts, dwellings which would be reckoned miserable by the occupants of Irish

hovels. At the usual signal, twelve pair of stalwart hands were ready to haul up our canoe, and we strode up the sands to meet the headman of the village, or, as my interpreter called him, the "Lord Mayor of the city of Nivo."

The "Mansion House" of the "Lord Mayor of Nivo," which I now entered in the usual humble fashion, was rather larger than those we had seen hitherto, but in other respects exactly similar. Outside, on either side of the three-foot doorway, were two broad shelves sheltered by an extension of the roof, and containing winter sledges and all manner of tackle not required until later in the year. Inside was a goodly gathering, some score, of Gilyaks, who were to be our sleeping companions that night. These comprised the *starosta*, his two wives, his children and relatives, the latter including our Armunka, who was a distant cousin.

The honoured place at the end of the hut, opposite the door (the east end it happened to be in this case), was reserved for me and my interpreter. Honourable as it was, we took the precaution of sprinkling it freely with insecticide, a proceeding in no way resented, and probably not understood; but when I came to shake a cloth over the fire, I was politely requested to refrain from an act derogatory to *Tur ni vookh*, the lord of that element.

The importance that fire plays in the life of peoples living in sub-arctic or arctic climes cannot be exaggerated. It is small wonder, therefore, that the element which protects them in winter, and saves them from a diet of raw and frozen food, should be elevated to the rank of a deity.

This protector is also a purifier, and to him they give the bodies of their dead. Their loved ones vanish—depart invisibly—and so they believe they may also return invisibly. Hence an added sacredness to the hearth. In bygone times it was a sin to put out the fire. The hostess on going to bed raked a small hole in the ashes, and placed there the burning fuel, covering it up with

more ashes. Thus the fire was conserved, and its continuity maintained. Even to-day I have seen this done, though custom is less strict than it was. It is still a sin to take even a spark from the fire outside of the hut, or to go out of the hut with a pipe which has been lighted inside.

The headman of Nivo was counted rich among the Gilyaks, his hut being littered with the weapons and produce of the chase. There were nets and snares, automatic bows and arrows, bear-spears, strangely shaped knives, seal-skins, dog-skins, as well as bark baskets, though of a ruder make than those of the Orochons. Two other objects attracted my special attention, one, a miniature of the Tsar Alexander III, and the other, an old double-barrelled fowling-piece mounted on a wooden biped, a cumbersome affair, but used by these natives and the Tungus in the winter hunts.

My rifle, which happened to be loaded, was a source of keen interest, and the *starosta*, taking it up, began fingering it, when it went off, fortunately over his shoulder and hitting nobody; but he was so astounded that he flung it down, exclaiming, "It has a devil in it!"

A greater witness to the wealth of this "Lord Mayor" was the possession of two wives. Very few Gilyaks on Sakhalin, perhaps two or three others, were wealthy enough to have bought more than one wife. Polygamy is no longer as common as it was, and this probably for two reasons—the decline in the number of women, and the growing poverty of the people. There are no adequate statistics to which I can appeal in support of the first, but evidence of the latter is met with at every turn. The only censuses (informal) ever taken were the inquiries of Mr. Sternberg in 1891 and 1895, among certain villages on the west coast of Sakhalin; where he found that the population had increased from 1041 to 1049 in $3\frac{1}{2}$ years, of which the increase of females was two and of males six.

The Gilyaks treat their children remarkably well, and though a girl is potential wealth, and will "fetch a wedding price," the boy as an early bread-winner, or rather fish-winner, is naturally of more account. The death-rate among young children is, of course, very high. In the villages on the west coast, north of Arkovo, Mr. Sternberg gives the births in $3\frac{1}{3}$ years as 130, out of which there were 34 deaths (in addition to 88 deaths among the older persons), *i.e.* an average of more than 26 per cent. The chief reason, however, of the decline in polygamy is more probably growing poverty. A wife has to be bought, and she is a moderately expensive article. Not that she is an unremunerative investment, but few Gilyaks are in a position to make the capital expenditure.

Dr. Schrenck, speaking of the Amur Gilyaks whom he visited fifty years ago, says their word "to marry" (*umgu genich*) means "to buy a wife," and the value of the articles given, such as bear-spears, kettles, boats, and dogs amounts to large sums; in one case to as much as 310 rubles (31 guineas). The Sakhalin Gilyaks are much poorer, and give a sledge with a team of dogs, or a spear and two pieces of foreign stuffs. Sometimes an additional arrangement obtains, where the husband, who, unable to pay a handsome price, and in consideration of the value of his wife as fish-cleaner and preparer, gives his services to his father-in-law as hunter or fisherman for one or two days in the season.

In olden times the Amur Gilyak bought slaves, who were mostly Ainu women, but in both these practices of polygamy and slavery the desire was not so much to possess a harem as to have sufficient domestic help. In one case it was to give the loved wife of his old age a young and strong assistant.

The Gilyaks are not an incontinent race, and compare very favourably with the Russian population of Sakhalin. Of course there are individual exceptions, especially now

that the pressing poverty prevents larger numbers of adult males having their own establishments. Yungkin, our "captain," had told us the very evening of our arrival at Nivo that he was going ashore to steal a wife for the night. We asked him if the husband would not object. "Oh, perhaps. Yes; he may slap her, but I shall give him some tobacco." It is said that in earlier times cousins (*ru-er*) had the juridic right of collective use of cousins, and even of the sisters of cousins, and possibly some faint remembrance of this, sanctions the more indiscriminate connexion of later days.

It is true that the wife works very hard, and, as with all semi-wild and wild peoples, ages quickly; yet among the Gilyaks she by custom retains a certain independence; and if objecting to her treatment, is free to divorce herself and run away to her father, who cannot even be called upon to refund the price originally paid him by her husband.

Mr. Pilsudsky, whom I found to be a great and true friend of the Gilyaks, tells how an intelligent member of this tribe, whom he knew—one of those appointed as overseer by the Russian Government to track *brodyagi*—came to him in difficulty one day about his wife. He had migrated to a far-off village on the river Nabil* and married. On the day that he arrived at Mr. P.'s hut, his father-in-law accompanied him, and together they told the story of the newly married wife's desertion and elopement with another Gilyak to the Bay of Okhotsk. This was hundreds of miles away, and Mr. P. was powerless to do anything, and advised the young husband to acquiesce in his fate, and let the wife live with the man she loved; but nothing would satisfy him save a paper with writing upon it. He had seen such effect mighty things; buy (ruble notes) untold wealth, and bring about the arrest of a criminal, and so he would have this magic.

* Which discharges on the east coast at a spot a few miles south of the mouth of the Tim.

His importunity was such that at last Mr. P. gave him a paper, on which he wrote, "It is not good to take away the wife of another man." The Gilyak took the paper, in an envelope, and went away; and afterwards on the strength of this paper, the writing of which nobody in the *taiga* could read, he got his wife back again.

Among the eighty-eight adults who died between 1891 and 1895 on the west coast, one was a young Gilyak woman who hanged herself, because she had been given in marriage to a man she disliked. Under this strange wild exterior, this dirt-encased, skin-clad, unkempt, ill-favoured form, we are startled by the "one touch of nature;" and yet the old, old songs of this people tell mostly of such events—of the death of the disappointed lovers, or of the impassioned appeal to the loved one.

Perhaps one day we may hope to have some of these Gilyak lyrics from the pen of Mr. P.; meanwhile, his kindness enables me to give one here, and to tell the story of another.

The usual *motif* of these lyrics is the betrothal of the girl when young, and her subsequent violent and secret attachment to another and youthful lover. If the mutual passion is strong, then rather than become the wife of one chosen by her parents for her, she and her lover will commit suicide. This they do in the same manner, *i.e.* by plunging a knife to the heart, or by strangling, since those who thus kill themselves in the same way will be together in heaven. There is one song, well known among the Gilyaks, which tells how a young man loved a fair maiden already betrothed in her childhood to another, and how they agreed to commit suicide. This man, however, proved faithless, and not only did not fulfil his word, but had never intended so to do. Until this day, it is said the maiden's spirit has never ceased to upbraid him, calling always, "Ah, you said you would kill yourself, and you have not. You deceived me! Men are liars!"

And to-day the reproachful tones of the cruelly deceived maiden may be heard in the "swish of the sledge and the howl of the dogs as the *narta* starts off"—

"You said you would kill yourself,
And you did not.
You are a deceiver!
Men are liars!"

All Gilyaks, it is said, know the old, old songs, the epics of their race, but with the lyrics it is otherwise, for they are very numerous, and always being added to. These are composed by the maidens of the tribe, who tell them to their girl friends, and they again to the Gilyak world. It may not be known who the authoress is, for that would be considered a want of modesty. Sometimes one may be heard to say, "There goes an old woman who made songs in her youth;" but it is not "good form." Woman's mission is the *ménage*. The Gilyak's notions of modesty are very strict. After they have passed the age of childhood brothers and sisters are not allowed to speak to one another. If the former attempted it, the latter would turn away in injured modesty. The song that follows, which I give in the original, with an English translation, reveals the Gilyak maiden in quite another attitude. This is no impassioned appeal, but a summary and cruel rejection of her lover. She holds him up to ridicule in her song, picturing him as an owl. She will have none of his addresses, and finishes with the words—

"Do not thou say of me
That thou art sorry for me."

i.e. admit that thou art unworthy of me, and cease to say thou lovest me.

GILYAK MAIDEN'S SONG.*

Cheu zyau naklyo
Chakh pop chihro tivra
Chiziyon ihrirsh
Hiti tan chera.

Cheu zyau naklyo
Pyalin yaliun kahre
Siati kshi akh tivra
Nyoliyo kharra
Kat khit lyo ne
Tarukh mindre.

Nyatin hosko pshtchazinko intint
Finenko tehre
Cheu zyau nonko
Ni fat shtchiv shtchivra
Chiziyon ihrirsh
Osiukh tokra
Chikh pokhitra.

Mkhilyan kut chinta
Msha kin vulke
Alif cheu mumko
Mkhilyan kanen nazlyo
Alif ziumpru
Nas char khiti
Chiziyon ihra
Cheu zyau naklyo
Ken oska khainkyo
Teni nav kharra
Nyokl visha khitlyo.

Finenko tehre
Ta ni lier itiya
Nerakh pefin tar itikh.

* The remarks on the pronunciation at the beginning of this book apply also to the transliteration of this song.

(TRANSLATION.)

The owl bird
Sat on top of a barkless tree
Hooting and trembling
And bending down.

The owl bird raises his head and cries,
For various things he asks;
On the end of Cape Siata he sat
Wrinkled up
And featherless,
From his forehead mud runs down.

Oh unhappy I! I look round myself,
I am sorry for myself,
The owlet
Sat on my knees,*
Hooting and trembling;
He lifts up
His head (all) white.

In a boat I saw thee,
On a level with the edge,
But the boat was without prow;
A long whip (lay)
Across the bow,
I raised the whip
And cried,
"Owl bird,
Thy face is against the sun, and therefore
Wrinkled
Is thy high forehead."

I am sorry for myself,
But do not thou say of me
That thou art sorry for me.

* She is distressed because, in her mind's eye, she sees him come and sit beside her or on her knees.

The meaning is not everywhere clear, and the temptation to read more into it than was intended is one that has to be resisted. There is no doubt of her withering scorn.

Her disappointed lover is described as featherless (bald), and with mud running down his forehead; and, again, as peevish in his cries for "various things."

In the third verse (the divisions are mine) she breaks into her plaint, apparently because his attentions make her miserable, and he persists in sitting down beside her, whereupon she strikes a note of contempt in her epithet of "owlet," or fledgeling.

Another picture rises without warning before us in the fourth verse. It is like a child's story made up on the spur of the moment. She is in a boat, a canoe apparently (without prow), and a whip, a long dog's whip the words imply, lies on the prow. Then she cries, "Thy face is against the sun, and therefore wrinkled is thy high forehead," and one is tempted to see in them a warning to the suitor that he looks too high—he, a denizen of the night, aspiring to the sunlight of her countenance. But I think it is more probable that the maiden authoress, having kept up her metaphor so long, has at length slid off into narrative, and drawn a picture from memory's portfolio.

A young man on marrying may make his home with his father; but if he be still in the single state and desire a hut of his own, he must marry, for it is more than *infra dig.* for him to do domestic work. For a Gilyak to take in his hand the woman's fish-knife (*ungu-dzhakho*) is considered a disgrace.

On Sakhalin, when the would-be husband—not the old man who buys a second wife thirteen years old to assist his ageing spouse—but the youth who aspires to set up housekeeping, is in possession of wealth enough to pay the price demanded, he is still confronted by a difficulty if he wishes to have a separate establishment. He may be content to live on in the paternal home, or, if

not, he will probably be able to get his friends and comrades to help him build a hut; but this is not enough, a cauldron is required, and this is a very expensive item. He may have to pay in skins the value of forty-five rubles (4½ guineas). I have even heard of them costing sixty rubles. This was the difficulty with our Vanka, who was a capable young man of fifteen, according to his own estimate, but according to our notions about twenty-six or twenty-eight. He was desirous of marrying, and offered to take me and my interpreter during the following summer to the "end of the world," with the aid of three of his companions, for the moderate charge of forty rubles apiece. With this sum he would be able to buy a cauldron, and he had already saved sufficient for the purchase of a wife. The offer was certainly reasonable, and one which compares favourably with Messrs. Thomas Cook & Son's "Round the World Tours!" Indeed, contrasted with Vanka's projected tour, I find Messrs. Cook & Son distinctly wanting in enterprise and adventure. So far as I in my "lettered" ignorance could ascertain, the end of the world is away north, but how we were to reach it in the cockle-shells of the Tim or Tro Gilyaks, I left to those who could talk familiarly of what was hidden from the President of the Royal Geographical Society himself, and to the great *Tol ni vookh*, who had already looked with favour upon us.

There were legends which seemed to indicate that Cape Maria (or Cape Elizabeth), in the extreme north of the island, was regarded as the "end of the world." We heard of "black men who were cannibals," * but beyond them and their country, Vanka assured us lay our goal. The Gilyak canoe seemed a poor sea-going craft, and the ignorance of the stars shown by the natives stamped them as a land race. On the other hand, they were noted for their

* What the origin of this report about black men was I do not know, but in the old legends the Gilyak hero is often represented as slaying his opponent and eating him.

excellent orientation in the dark. From Vanka we could get no information about the moon, and so I asked if he knew anything about the man in it. No, his father had told him something about him once, but he had forgotten, and, though he knew he was there, he really couldn't tell if he were a bad man, condemned to live there, or a good man.

The cauldron plays an important part, not only in the everyday domestic economy, but at the very threshold of the new joint life—at the marriage ceremony itself. At least, this is so among some of the clans on Sakhalin. No religious function, as we understand it, graces the occasion ; only a simple custom, which appears as a traditional sanction to this important departure in the Gilyak's family life.

The payment having been made without formality to the bride's father, a feast is prepared in his hut, to which the bridegroom comes with his friends, bringing a new Japanese cauldron. The marriage feast is then cooked in this new vessel, and eaten with rejoicing, for the eating together is part of the necessary function. This ended, the two cauldrons, the new one and that pertaining to the hut, are both cleaned and placed by the bridegroom's kindred in front of the bride, who, with her partner, is standing with her back turned to the fire, and face to the door of the hut. She then places her left foot in the new vessel and her right in the paternal, or rather maternal, cauldron, the two being placed one step apart. The bridegroom then moves them one by one, a step at a time, until the bride reaches the door. Here the couple take up their own and go to their new hut, amid the acclamations of their kindred.

We have already seen how sacred the hearth is to the Gilyak, and in the rites adopted at the lying-in-state of a deceased woman, her intimate relation and duty towards *Tur ni vookh*, the god of fire. Even as the fire is her rightful domain, so is the cauldron her special care, and

hers alone; not even her daughters may interfere in this her private and sacred sphere. She alone has the right of putting on the cauldron; this is her right as hostess. Whatever the putting of the feet into the cauldrons may symbolize, the fact that the bride does it to both the maternal and the new one evidently witnesses for the first time to her equality with her mother, her rightful position as a *hausfrau* and head of her own domestic establishment. Henceforth her status is also guaranteed among her husband's kindred.

On the following morning I proceeded to barter at Nivo for native snares (*yu ru*), belts (*vi bu is*), with gunpowder, skin-flask, shot-horn, flint and steel pouch, etc., and what I was assured was, the marriage trousseau of one of the "Lady Mayoresses," the elder wife of our host. She was very astute, and drove a hard bargain, but I succeeded in getting her seal-skin coat, a handsome garment having a pattern worked in by the employment of different shades of skin, her fur gloves, and a Manchurian silk wadded hat, which was probably in her younger days the envy of all her friends.

The *shubi*, or fur coats of the men and women, are often alike and taken in mistake by either, but the women prefer seal-skin and the men dog-skin. Probably this is because the former seldom go far from their huts, and it is hot and inconvenient to have a great furry coat on (the hair is worn outside) during domestic duties rather than a light and smooth seal-skin. The woman's hat (*hakh-pisakh*) is not unlike a sun-bonnet in shape, but has three lappets, two for the ears and one for the coiffure, which is done up prettily with rings in two pigtails. This shape of hat has the advantage of protecting the ears from the cold, and yet being easily removed without catching the earrings and tearing the ears. Earrings (*meskh*) are in general use, and mostly of Japanese and Chinese make. They are large simple rings of silver, of one and a half or more inches in

diameter, with an agate or two. These, with the rare silk brocade, sable-skin hats, *shubi*, and shoes are regarded as family heirlooms. They are bought one after the other with the surplus "wealth" of the Gilyak family, and represent the capital of the hut. A bundle of paper-money or a heap of silver pieces have little attraction for the native, whereas a sable-skin *shuba* or a piece of sky-blue silk is a "thing of beauty and a joy for ever." Moreover, they are just as useful in the business of exchange; and the native, long used to dealing in the concrete, knows exactly their value, whereas money is unfamiliar; and when he comes in his travels to a Russian store, he has no standard by which to measure the value of his ruble notes.

The reader would sympathize with his position if he suddenly found himself dropped down in a Korean village on the day of a fair with a pocketful of "cash." In such case he might congratulate himself on having only paid double the market value of his purchases. Hence it was that in dealing with the Gilyaks and Orochons, we found that they would ask much more in money than in goods from us, and that our advantage lay in bartering.

The younger wife of our host was considered the belle of all the Gilyaks, but I will let the reader judge of her claims to beauty from the accompanying illustration, in which she is represented playing a musical instrument. Vanka, who claimed to be a cousin of hers, had brought this forth from the recesses of the hut, and both he and she played upon it. It is now in my possession; but I must confess the music appealed more to the imagination than the ear, for when played with the tongue or even the hand it was with difficulty we could hear it. It consists of one string of fish-gut, strung along a stick and over a cylindrical piece of birch bark; and it goes by the scarcely euphonious name of *tin-kirn*. Other musical instruments are a little wooden jew's harp called a *kos-cha;* a small bag of fish-skin stretched tightly on to a circular piece of wood like a

THE "LORD MAYOR" (ON THE LEFT) AND THE TWO "LADY MAYORESSES" OF NIVO.

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drumhead, containing bones which are rattled; and the fish-skin tambourine already mentioned.

At this village of Nivo, which with Chaivo is the best known on the east coast, we heard much of the "good old times," and the latter-day degeneration of the Gilyaks, both in physique and in numbers. Yungkin told how they used to be "big and strong as giants, but now were small, short, and *dry*."

In explanation of this the Russians accuse them of being lazy, and according to our notions there is a good deal in the accusation. A Gilyak may be found sitting by a river teeming with fish; he has made a catch and wants no more, yet before winter is over his stores will have given out. For this state of things habit and tradition are responsible. It would savour of greediness, and perhaps even of distrust of *Tol ni vookh*, to exceed the usual custom. "The Great Spirit does not wish us to catch so many" is the reply to the stranger's inquiry. And probably in the olden time such dependence on Providence was not misplaced, when their hunting-grounds and the wild denizens thereof were practically limitless. It is said that twenty years ago a Gilyak would spear, during spawning-time, 300 *kita* in a day, whereas now he secures but eighty.

After all, regrettable as it is, the decline of the race must be attributed to contact with the white man. The immediate result of the latter's presence has been the curtailment of the native hunting preserves; and though it is true that the Russians have, outside of their main settlements, made little impression on the *taiga*, yet the best fishing-grounds, *e.g.* the river Tim and the west coast, have naturally attracted the white man, and in so far limited the possibilities of the Gilyak fishery. Then the clearings, and especially the fires—in some cases carelessly left to spread destruction—have naturally driven off or destroyed the wild game and restricted it to smaller compass.

Some of their elders told us that "before the Russians came there were plenty of bears, sables, and reindeer, but since they arrived and burnt the woods the rich had become poor. In those days the poor man could go into the *taiga* as the rich man to-day" (*i.e.* with as large a following of helpers and as many snares to collect from).

An example of the way in which the proximity of the Russians incidentally renders the conditions of life harder is seen in the feeding of the Gilyak dogs. These cannot always be allowed their liberty, and the fiercer ones are tied up, lest they should attack the cattle of Russian neighbours—a certain *casus belli*. Accustomed to feed themselves the dogs have now to be fed, and their master's winter stores naturally give out sooner. To avoid this the natives migrate further afield to less favourable fishing-grounds.*

The older Gilyaks say that during their time, and their fathers' before them, but one famine had occurred before the Russians came, about eighty years ago, but since then there have been many repetitions. In the winter and early spring of 1896, and again of 1897, there were successive bad times, and around Rikovsk special assistance had to be given to the natives by the authorities. In 1898, a wet autumn prevented the accumulation of the usual stores of dried fish, and was followed by another very bad winter. The worthy ex-overseer at Derbensk, in whose hut we had stayed, was on duty down the Tim during that year. So terrible was the state of things that he found "one or more dying in every hut," and in the hope of stemming the tide of disease following on the ravages of famine, he took upon himself the responsibility of giving away the Crown stores; but in most cases it was already too late, and large numbers died of the *grippe*. The filthy

* Dr. Pogaevsky, in a report on the food of the Gilyak, in the local and official Sakhalin Kalendar, 1899.

condition of the huts, and the accumulations of winter, aggravated the effects of the ravages of disease and the exposure to the severities of the climate.

Such a state of things presses hardly on the children, and accounts for the high rate of mortality among them. There being no statistics of the early years of Russian occupation, we can only gather from tradition and the shrinking of villages and from isolated statistics of recent years, the gradual diminution of the Gilyak race on Sakhalin.

The figures already quoted show, for the population of the Gilyak villages lying between Arkovo and Cape Maria on the west coast, the miserable increase of $\frac{10}{43}$ per cent., or scarcely $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., per annum.

Lung and throat diseases and scurvy accounted for most of the deaths among the older people, but four died from accident, of whom one was frozen, another drowned, one already mentioned hanged herself, and another was beaten to death by her husband.

Coughs, colds, and pulmonary complaints are very prevalent, and the methods of healing scarcely adequate. For a sore throat, a concoction of *moshun-tomash* (field camo mile) is swallowed, and for inflammation of the lungs, a diluted exusion from the fungi of trees is drunk in place of tea.

Whether these herbal remedies are dictated by experience and the Gilyak knowledge of medicinal herbs, which is said to be considerable, or is anything more than Shamanistic lore and a series of charms, I cannot say. The treatment adopted for other ailments, such as toothache, swellings, earache, and ulcer, is certainly of the latter kind. For the first they apply some of the down of a hazel-grouse (*Tetrao bonasia*) to the cheek; for the second and third, the squirrel's tail (*olf-rega*) and a piece of its ear (*tul-noss*) are respectively tied to the parts affected; and for the last, *gazhu*, *i.e.* a piece of a wasp's nest, is placed on the ulcer.

Many of the peoples of these northern climes make intoxicating beverages, as for instance the Yakuts, who manufacture a spirit from toadstools. The Gilyaks may be considered an exception. There is, however, a decoction, but little heard of, made by them from the "burrs" of birch-trees. These exude a black juice so strong that a piece of the wood, of the size of a lump of sugar, is sufficient to make a big cauldron of the beverage. The decoction is sweet to the taste, and has a welcome softening effect on the organs of respiration.

To-day Russian vodka, though prohibited by the Government, is eagerly sought after and frequently obtained.

CHAPTER XV

FROM NIVO TO IRR KIRR

An aristocrat—A party intent on buying a bear—Five *brodyagi* on our path—A memorable escape—A two months' campaign—Cannibalism—Migration of birds—Seal added to the *menu*—*Tol ni vookh* delivers us—Tracking a bear—A winter duel with Bruin—Reindeer hunting in the *buran*.

FROM Nivo a start was made with our river crew, Vanka and Armunka, to ascend the Tim. Both had been ostentatiously pleased to welcome us back, but when we came to pack I found Armunka averse from helping. I remonstrated with him for leaving to Vanka all the work, save what little I and my interpreter were doing, but to no effect; so going up to him I took him by the shoulders and shook him. I was really angry, and only refrained from boxing his ears at the request of Vanka, and from doubt of the attitude of the dozen Gilyaks who were looking on. Vanka good naturedly apologized for his companion, explaining that he had been making merry and the effect had not yet worn off. There was, however, more than this in it; and we were considerably amused to learn later that Armunka was, as we should say, of independent means, came of an aristocratic family; and therefore his pride of ancestry at times asserted itself, and he refused to do menial service! It was several days later that we arrived at his home in the village of Irr Kirr, but in vain I looked around for the paternal acres, the vast estates of this Gilyak peer. The hut was

comparatively small and rather bare. I must do him justice, however, for there was no doubt of his being a great hunter. During the previous year he had killed three bears and captured two, which had brought him honour, and would gain him wealth.

It was with much opposition that I finally got the canoe started. The sea was rough in the bay, "white horses" still crested its surface, and rain had been threatening all day. Our host, with the wisdom of a weather prophet, foretold our upset, and even Vanka all but point-blank refused to start. And here I will confess that when our frail craft danced in the midst of seething waters, I began to ask myself if I had been foolhardy. Personally I ran little risk, for I could swim; but my interpreter and the natives could not, and I had no right to endanger their lives. Again, however, Fortune smiled on us, and we gained at length the sheltered channel of the delta with no more than a little water shipped, Vanka having wisely tied down all the baggage by means of our tent canvas. At the mouth of the river, on the islands of the delta, huge logs of driftwood lay piled up like lazy giants waiting for the floods to wake them to action. Choosing the deepest channel we got into the main stream, and proceeded for two or three miles before the sun set and forced us to camp in the swamps.

Scarcely had we disembarked when a boat, impelled by four pairs of sculls and a paddle astern, hove in sight. It was a party of Gilyaks from Nivo going up to Derbensk to buy a bear. The purchase-money was not in their purses, indeed had they possessed them it would have been somewhat difficult to get it in, for the price proposed was one dog, a piece of Chinese silk, and some tobacco. We were somewhat surprised at their arrival, for we had not heard of their intention before, and I guessed that they had not been quite ready, and this had been partly the cause of their anxiety to delay us. It was evident

that they wished to accompany us ; whether for their own protection or, in accordance with secret instructions from the police-officer, for ours, we knew not. The reason of this move was a message delivered to us at Nivo by Vanka, and sent to the *starosta* there through natives, by the police. It was to the effect that five convicts had escaped (I believe three really had escaped, and the other two had joined them from a settlement), of whom three had managed to obtain two soldiers' guns and a Winchester rifle, besides revolvers. At the same time our Gilyaks were given permission to shoot any Russian who approached our camp.

We welcomed the appearance of these five natives, for in view of the possibility of a surprise, we had resolved to take it in turns to keep watch at night. A few days later the police-officer himself, whom we overtook, gave us more details about these five *brodyagi*, who, he said, were bent on murdering our hosts the prospectors, or failing them the Vanderbilts, *i.e.* the Orochon brothers Fizik, or the captains of the Japanese brigs, all of whom were in possession of stores. The Japanese captains had evidently been warned, for their schooners, instead of riding in the bay, had anchored in the strait when we passed them on the evening of our arrival at Nivo.

Since the river Tim afforded the only route for the outlaws, we must either meet or pass.

As with most of those who escape from the prisons, these men were bent on reaching the north of the island, beyond the cordons of soldiers, and getting across from Cape Pogobi to the mainland. On the small chance of their ultimate escape I have already enlarged ; but of the comparatively large numbers who in summer make a bid for freedom and are roaming at large on the island the reader can have but little conception.

The importance of this factor, the *brodyaga*, in checking the development of the resources of the island, and rendering hard and insecure the lot of those who try to

live a decent and thrifty life, can be gauged from the following narrative. It is a story often told by the camp-fire or at the evening meal in Sakhalin, but I give it unabridged, at the risk of confusing the reader with the names of insignificant places, in the exact words (translated) of the report of the Military Governor of Sakhalin to his superior officer, the Governor-general of the Amur district, a report which I need hardly say was not intended to fall into my hands. Were it not for this unimpeachable authority, such a state of things as is described, added to the fear of the authorities lest a general uprising was at hand, would seem impossible.

"In the summer of 1896, from the prisons of Rikovsk and Alexandrovsk, nine convicts ran away, of whom two were Russians, Krevenko and Vergulenko, and the other seven, Caucasian mountaineers. Although they escaped at different times, yet somewhere they joined forces and became one gang, turning up in the Timovsk *okrug* near the Bay of Patience, where for 200 versts along the coast are Japanese fishing-stations.*

"As from the regiment at Korsakovsk very few soldiers could be spared, two patrols of five men each were despatched. One of these was at Tikmenev,† 300 versts from Korsakovsk, and the other at Manue, midway between the two. The *brodyagi* came without hindrance, by the cleared track from Onor, to Nay-ero, near to Tikmenev, unaware of the patrol there, and were captured before they could offer any resistance.

"On July 27 (O.S.) the convoy started with a guard for Korsakovsk. The sub-officer, Kuyat, who had but four soldiers under him, appointed three of these, with six 'exile-settlers,' five of whom had shot-guns, to form the guard. By July 29 the convoy had safely reached Salutora, a distance of sixty versts. Here they had a day's

* Occupied by the Japanese during summer.

† At the mouth of the Poronai river.

"BY THE CLEARED TRACK FROM ONOR TO NAY-ERO." [*To face page* 280.

rest, and the six 'exile-settlers' were replaced by six from Salutora, but these had only three shot-guns. On July 31 they started again, and had proceeded for twelve versts along the shore when the vagabonds, observing that the soldiers' and exiles' watch was not strict, suddenly made a concerted attack on their guard ; the convict Vergulenko wrenching from the hands of an 'exile-settler' his gun, and shooting fatally a soldier, Dumnitsky. Another vagabond seized the gun of the dead soldier and killed the exile Kartovich, whereupon the other exiles ran away, leaving the remaining two soldiers to combat the nine *brodyagi.* In this unequal fight the soldier Liuchetsky received a terrible blow from an oar, which rendered him unconscious, his gun dropping from his hand before he had fired. The last soldier, Vilzhus, was dreadfully beaten by the vagabonds, and left unarmed. Having thus freed themselves, the *brodyagi* cut the telegraph-wire between Salutora and Korsakovsk, and being now in possession of three single-barrelled rifles, with twenty-three military cartridges and two shot-guns, they made an attack, on the evening of the same day, on the Japanese fishermen at the village of Kaspuchi. Here the gang killed one Japanese, wounded another, and, beating many others, made off with their big boat, with a view of getting away to a Japanese island * or joining a pirate vessel. They failed, however, in this attempt, for a great storm sprang up, and they found themselves cast ashore once more at Kaspuchi. The robber band now disappeared with their Japanese loot, into the *taiga.* Meanwhile the two wounded soldiers, Liuchetsky and Vilzhus, having recovered consciousness, crawled wearily back to Salutora, where their wounds were bound up. Later on, a doctor, sent from Korsakovsk, was able to put them on the road to recovery. The soldiers remaining at Tikmenev (two), and the five at Manue, and some on guard at the yacht *Emilia,* belonging to the merchants

* Yezo, or one of the Kuriles.

Semeinov & Co., when they received word of what had happened, joined as one company, and despatched five of their party, four privates under the command of one Skipchik.

"On August 3 they came upon the Japanese fishing-station of Kaspuchi, which had been attacked; and on the next day followed up the track of the *brodyagi* into the *taiga*. These they found about four versts distant encamped on an inaccessible (*sic*) mountain, the sides of which were densely covered with trees of one hundred years' growth. Nevertheless, the party gave attack, and the vagabonds ran, leaving all their booty behind them; but not without wounding two of their assailants. This necessitated the party returning to Salutora, there to deposit their wounded.

"On August 5 two of the vagabonds, Krevenko and Vergulenko, gave themselves up, and the latter confessed * that he had killed the soldier Dumnitsky. On the same day also arrived the district doctor, Sorminsky, to give aid to the wounded; the officer Okula Khulak to make an investigation; and Lieutenant Merzhanov (of a Kazak regiment) with a company of six soldiers.

"On the 8th another company of six soldiers was sent as reinforcements from Korsakovsk,† and was posted at Mogun-kotan ‡ (forty-six versts from Salutora).

"To Lieutenant Merzhanov were given the following orders:—

(*a*) to take under his command all the companies of soldiers on the east coast of Sakhalin;

* Probably under terrible beating.

† Evidently the authorities at the chief place of the district were getting anxious lest the gang should direct their next attack upon it, and the convicts should rise.

‡ This, like most of the place names on the Bay of Patience, is of Ainu nomenclature. *Kotan* is the Ainu for village. There is a suggestive likeness in this word to the Manchu *khotun*, which means a city, *e.g. Kirin ula khotun* is the city of the river Kirin.

(*b*) to track the *brodyagi* ;

(*c*) to protect from robbery the Japanese fisheries ;

(*d*) to prevent damage to the telegraph-wire ;

(*e*) to protect persons sent to repair it.

He had under his command four companies, numbering in all twenty-one men. With so small a force to follow the vagabonds, to protect the coast-line for 200 versts, and at the same time to keep guard over the two convicts already arrested, was a difficult undertaking. Notwithstanding that the Korsakovsk regiment had reduced its number on guard, and all those on domestic service, it had no power to send more reinforcements, therefore orders were given * to add to the strength of the companies by sending exiles and Ainus, who were to do 'second-rate' field service. At the same time the chief of the Timovsk district was ordered to send a company from Onor to Tikmenevsk Post (Tikmenev).

"But as yet, before the companies had been able to effect a junction, the gang had robbed a Japanese store-hut near the fishing-station of Veng-kotan ; and on August 8, at 11 p.m., had made an assault on the Japanese fishery, Sung-kotan. Here they met with a repulse by the little company under Lieutenant Merzhanov, who had hurried to the spot ; but succeeded in making good their escape into the *taiga*.

"After this the gang, hard pressed by the soldiers, were seen in several spots on the east coast between Salutora and Nay-ero, but they did not risk any more attacks on the Japanese fisheries.

"On August 22, at two versts' distance from Nay-ero, the soldiers came upon the gang in a dark corner of the forest. It was a black night, and under cover of it the *brodyagi* fled, but not without wounding two of their pursuers, a Kazak, Buburikin, and an Ainu. These two were sent to Salutora, where the regimental doctor, Sakalov,

* By the Military Governor.

attended to them. The gang, which was by such pertinacious following prevented from committing robberies among the Japanese fishermen, now abandoned the sea-coast and made for the north towards Onor; on the way making an assault on Dal, a station thirty-five versts from Nay-ero, containing only two inhabitants, an overseer and a watchman, who were convicts from Korsakovsk prison. The vagabonds had already set fire to the fuel which they had placed around the habitation when they were overtaken by Lieutenant Merzhanov and his company, but made good their escape to the north again. On the following day the lieutenant and his company continued the pursuit for thirty-five versts to the 'village' of Khoy, one of those destitute of inhabitants and stores. Further the soldiers, quite exhausted and without provisions, could not go, and, having rested here one day, they returned.

"On August 25, by order of the Military Administration, six soldiers were despatched from Rikovsk with extreme speed. By the evening of the 28th they had reached the village of Hamdasa the Second, a distance of 100 versts. The vagabonds, ignorant of these movements, made a night attack on the prison store of that very village, which was defended by the soldiers. During the operations one of the gang was killed. To bring the matter to an end* two more companies of six soldiers each were despatched on August 29, one to the village of Taulan and the other to Palivo. Six days later, on September 5, the *brodyagi*, unaware of the presence of the soldiers, attacked the village of Taulan, and were repelled with a loss of one killed, one severely wounded, and two taken prisoners, the remaining two disappearing, with their guns, into the *taiga*.

"Ten days later, on September 15, these two vagabonds reached the river Pilinga in the Alexandrovsk district, where is a summer-hut. Here they suddenly

* And to forestall an attack on Rikovsk.

THE VILLAGE OF HAMDASA II.

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and unexpectedly met two soldiers, sent to kill a bear in the neighbourhood. A fight ensued, in which one *brodyaga* was severely wounded and succumbed to his injuries,* and the other escaped into the *taiga*. At the end of three days he was caught." The report ends here, but the last of such a notorious band was no doubt hanged.

Three years before this the road between Rikovsk and Onor was the scene of tragic events, which even found echo in England. Though the reports which reached the London papers, of the processions of corpses of convicts and horrible cruelties practised, were exaggerated, yet the circumstances of the case were bad enough. Two hundred convicts were ordered in the summer of 1892 to make this road through the *taiga*. Unfortunately for them and their guards it was not only the *taiga* but the *tundra* which had to be penetrated, for the track was to follow the Poronai river, which flows through a wide, level and swampy valley. Large numbers of the gang died of dysentery and fever, and starvation followed in their wake; for unexpected falls of rain rendered the swamps impassable and cut off parties from their base of supplies. Towards the end of the following summer three of the party, who could bear the privations no longer, planned an escape into the *taiga*. In this they succeeded, but it was only to prove for them a change for the worse. For many days they eluded their pursuers, but in so doing got deeper into the primæval forest and found it more and more difficult to get sustenance; so that when two of the three were ultimately captured, there was little doubt that they had been driven, in their extremity, to kill and eat their comrade. One of them was found to have a human bone in his pouch, but already his mind had been unhinged by his awful experience, and it was impossible to tell from his own account whether their companion had died or whether

* Probably severely beaten by his assailant after the struggle.

they had murdered him. His insanity saved his life, and he was put under treatment, and to this day goes by the name of Vasiliv the Cannibal. The illustration is from a photograph taken after his arrest. The other, Kalenik by name, was sentenced to ninety-nine strokes of the *plet*, from which he died.

As a rule, the convicts on Sakhalin are of a dull and heavy type, absolutely wanting in power of organization; and it says much for these hardy Caucasian mountaineers that they were able to avoid capture by their pursuers for five or six weeks. Many are longer at large than this, but being in twos or threes, are better able to find sufficient supplies and to avoid the attentions of the trackers. They are also not the object of extraordinary military tactics.

Our new acquaintances, the five Gilyaks who had just joined us, camped alongside in Orochon tents. Whether the Orochons had learnt to make these, as was reported, or whether they in their turn obtained them from the Japanese or Manchus, I do not know. They were tiny erections of light drill, not more than three or four feet high and shaped like a square marquee. A long stake was thrust obliquely into the ground, and from this hung the tent, as if it were a diving bell, the corners being tied to a bear-spear, paddle, etc. How two or three people slept in this without getting asphyxiated, I cannot explain.

I and my companion were secure from such a fate, as our construction hardly merited even the name of a shelter, and that night a hail-storm, followed by a keen wind from the Okhotsk Sea, swept into it. The discomfort of getting up at 6 a.m. to face a cold biting wind, with no more clothes to put on, is something the ordinary dweller in civilized places cannot readily realize, but an experience even more unpleasant followed in sitting with limbs stiff and "dead" for six long hours at the bottom of a canoe, facing the wind and longing for gleams of sunshine to thaw even one's hands.

VASILIV, "THE CANNIBAL."

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That night snow fell; winter with his brusque manners in these parts had suddenly arrived to stay, at least on this, the east, side of the island. The mountains had put on their white caps, and would refuse to doff them until July of the following year. The next morning opened, however, quite still though cold. Our larder was in a poor state again, our tinned food was exhausted, and we had only scraped along by the aid of a duck shot the day before and the brick-like remains of a loaf of black bread given us by the prospectors. Now, as Vanka put it, the wild ducks had driven away south.

The autumn migration of birds takes place rather later on Sakhalin than it does on the mainland. Travellers, like Prjevalsky, and observers, such as Mr. Seebohm and Mr. Harvie-Brown, have left us records of the passage of birds in spring and autumn to and from Siberia over the Mongolian sandy wastes. The feathered inhabitants who spend their summer on Sakhalin have no vast waterless plains to traverse, and no long detours in order to keep track, where possible, of river valleys. Their journey is short because they winter for the most part in Japan or China; and simple because the long backbone of Sakhalin is an unfailing guide, and provides them with mountain torrents by the way.

But by this time—the end of September—the bulk of the avifaunal inhabitants had already departed for southern climes. The ducks, the mallard (*Anas boschas*), the harlequin duck (*Clangula histrionica*), and the golden eye (*C. glaucion*); the teals, the garganey teal (*Anas querquedula*), the Baikal teal (*A. querq. formosa*), and the crested teal (*A. falcota*), which are to be shot in Ni Bay and up the Tim, had been almost the last to go, and we sighted a few and shot a mallard three or four days' journey up the river. Gone was the hooper swan (*Cygnus musicus*), whose cries had sometimes disturbed our rest at night. Among the Gilyaks this feathered friend goes by the

onomatopoetic name of *kikkik*. The bean goose (*Anser segetum, Middendorfii*), of which we had seen several flocks on our outward journey, had also departed, for he, like the ducks, winters in Japan or China.

Perhaps the earliest departing guest had been the cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), called by the Gilyaks *rik*. Having a long journey before him to the Southern hemisphere, we never saw him, and indeed he is rather a rare visitor to Sakhalin. If the cuckoo was the earliest the snow bunting (*Plectrophanes nivalis*) is about the latest to leave. Between the two limits a variety of smaller birds take their flight southwards, most of which had already set out. The sand martins (*Cotile riparia*) had gone ere we commenced our journey, the wagtails (*Motacilla lugens* and *taivana*) had flown since, and we saw neither the white-rumped swift (*Cypselus pacificus*) nor the needle-tailed variety (*Chaetura caudacuta*), which are certainly uncommon on the Tim. The brambling (*Fringilla montifringilla*), the bullfinch (*Pyrrhula rosacea*), and many other of the smaller birds had left, including the Japanese lark (*Alauda japonica*), the Siberian ruby-throated robin (*Erithacus calliope*), and the whistling robin (*E. sibilans*). We missed also, on our return, the eastern turtle dove (*Turtur orientalis*), which the Gilyaks call the *tu tut*.

A few stragglers such as the Japanese wren (*Troglodytes fumigatus*), the long-tailed titmouse (*Acredula caudata*), the red-throated and the eastern tree pipits (*Anthus cervinus* and *maculatus*), and the dusky ouzel (*Merula fuscata*) linger behind the main bodies.

Comparatively speaking, the forests seemed birdless, and only a very occasional white-tailed eagle (*Haliëtus albicillus*), staying behind to fish in the upper reaches of the Tim, a solitary owl (*Syrnium uralense*), or a passing crow (*Corvus corone*), was seen or heard.

Deep in the forest, if one ventured to follow up the tracks of some wild animal, those nomads, rather than

migrants, as Mr. Charles Dixon would call them, the grouse family, were still to be found at home. We saw the hazel grouse (*Tetrao bonasia*), the capercailzie (*T. urogallus*), but not the willow grouse (*Lagopus albus*) though it is also found there.

Our larder suffered in consequence of the departure of ducks, snipe, and geese ; but we could still fall back upon a cup of boiled rice, and that same morning saw another, though scarcely tasty, addition to the *menu*. The other canoe with its crew of five had been keeping just ahead of us for some time, when they signalled to us to heave to and keep quiet. Evidently they had seen something, and we watched them closely. First they paddled ashore and landed one of their number with a gun, who clambering on to the rush-covered bank and creeping as best he could along the edge, was lost to sight higher up. Suddenly the report of a gun sounded in our ears, followed by the plash of the oars as they gripped the water, and the long but quickening strokes as the canoe raced forward to catch the prey.

We followed at a slower pace, and found them hauling in the carcase of a seal (*Phoca vitulina*). It had been lying asleep on a snag when sighted, and so soundly that they had wisely risked delay in order to make sure of a shot from *terra firma*.

Our supper was assured for that day, though we scarcely expected to find in seal flesh a great delicacy. The Gilyaks prefer the "bacon," but in this case scarcely any of it remained uneaten. We, my interpreter and I, decided that the brain would be the least objectionable part, and hoped to deceive ourselves into imagining that we were eating calves' sweet-breads ; but we little knew how near we came to committing a mortal sin. For it was a matter of common knowledge among the Gilyaks that to eat the brain of a seal was indeed a deadly sin.

In addition to any other terrors that the next world might hold for us, to have put salt on a seal's brain, roasted and eaten it, would have resulted in our never killing a seal again. I am free to confess that we were still unbelieving and rash enough to be willing to try our fate, but all attempts to gain permission failed ; and we came to the conclusion that our natives were quite sincere in their belief, whatever was the *raison d'être* of it. The moon, peering down through the trees of the forest, shone upon a strange scene that evening. Seven wild-looking figures, with raven pigtails, squatted round a seething cauldron, were tearing with teeth and fingers the flesh from the bones of the seal. For ourselves, a piece of the flesh was chosen and roasted separately on stakes ; and though under such circumstances one can eat almost anything, I confess when my friends, who lay some store on a *menu recherché*, ask me whether it was nice, my usual reply is that it tasted not unlike black-game fried in a pan used previously for herrings.

The day before, we had come across one or two deserted camp-fires, and this day we passed a newly made raft, which our natives declared to be that of the five *brodyagi*, who must be hiding in the *taiga*. We were concerned for the prospectors, whom a period of freedom from attack had lured into a false security ; and as soon as was possible we gave messages of warning to natives in the hope of their reaching the ears of our late hosts. A month later we heard of their safety, and several months after I received a letter from one of them telling of the arrival of the five *brodyagi*. Fortunately the engineers were duly prepared for them, and insisted on their men, who were convicts and ex-convicts themselves, and who immediately declared their neutrality, not allowing any of the five to enter the hut. Coming out from the inner room of the hut one evening, they found two or three of the *brodyagi* sitting among the workmen. There was only one course to be

adopted, that of promptitude and firmness. Without hesitation the masters cocked their revolvers and threatened to shoot unless the outlaws left the hut and never appeared there again. This determined attitude had its effect, and finding that they could not persuade their mates to join them in attacking their masters, the vagabonds left; one, who had merely joined them because he was penniless, being persuaded to return to Derbensk, while the others plunged into the *taiga* to wander in the direction of the inhospitable north. My correspondent added they were "either shot or taken prisoners again." The one soldier, who was at the oil-wells, was anxious to have them arrested and taken as far at least as Nivo; but had he attempted to do so he would certainly have been murdered, and to have impressed one or two of the working convicts as guard would have been worse than useless.

After more than three days' rowing and punting we came to the first Gilyak village since leaving the bay. All the men-folk were absent, for it was the end of the Gilyak financial year; and although I did not hear of any accountants being called in or auditors appointed, a strict account of debts and payments was doubtless kept in the Gilyak memory. The current coin was dried fish, and the accumulation of this after spawning-time was now being applied by the men, who had gone up the river, to the payment of debts for rice and seal-oil borrowed, and in exceptional cases for potatoes advanced by the Russians. Camping a little higher up on the opposite side of the river in the forest, our natives were very merry, notwithstanding that the seal had been incontinently disposed of, and dried fish and seal-oil was the one course on their *menu*. To this, for breakfast on the following morning, were added the seeds of the Swiss pine (*Pinus cembra pumila*). A Gilyak youth of the party disappeared into the *taiga*, and quickly re-appeared with a lapful of the cones, from which they picked the seeds like monkeys, with teeth and

fingers. This day we overtook the police-officer, whom we had met in the Bay of Ni. Though he and his soldiers had started three or four days before us, they had got no further than this. Handicapped by a heavily laden flat-bottomed boat, they had to punt and tow it in turns, the soldiers wading up to their middle and wearily dragging it against stream. They presented a pitiable sight, their boots were patched and tied together, and in some cases a mere bundle of rags was all they had for "foot-wear." So long had they already been, that they had not sufficient salt meat to last another day.

We pushed on ahead, and as we neared the centre of the island the wind dropped and the sun once more asserting its power, existence was again not merely bearable but enjoyable. It was another glimpse of autumn before winter should seize and hold us firmly in his cold embrace. The shallows below were clear, the sky above blue, and the banks, a mingling of silvering willows (*Salix macrolepis* and *Sakhalinensis*) and yellowing birches (*Betula alba*), backed by the black forests of firs creeping up the sides of the mountains. And as if life and action should not be missing from the picture, five punting-poles were going in rhythm, and five bodies bending and swinging as the canoe swept on. It took me back to another picture, of palm-girt sandy bays, ruined Mahratta forts, and the even more graceful bend and swing of the lithe bodies of the Ratnagari fishermen. Many a year may I remember the sunlit evenings spent on the tranquil river Tim, the haunt of the bear and the fox, with the simple, jolly Gilyaks, full of fun and always ready to join in a joke, making always the best of our situation, whether it was to camp on a pleasant sandy reach, by the light of a golden sunset, or to betake ourselves, soaked and stiff, to a swampy stretch, swept by a biting wind. Not even when we were in danger of crossing their sacred beliefs did they get angry with us; only putting us gently on the right way

they saved us from deadly sin. Happily we had not fallen into the hands of bigoted or orthodox civilized peoples.

Tol ni vookh, the great lord of the element to which we had entrusted ourselves, showed himself merciful even to unbelievers. In the course of that afternoon, the canoe with the five punters had gained considerably upon us, and as we neared an enticing creek on our right, the haunt of bears and sables, Vanka suggested this as a short cut. We, nothing loth, gave our consent. Here through rapids and between fallen logs we threaded our way until we got to what appeared to be an *impasse*. Tree-trunks blocked the way, and the current, suddenly impeded, rushed over them. Even Vanka declared it to be impossible to go on, we must return; but, having put our hand to the plough, we were averse from returning, and I suggested that even if the canoe dragged a bit we could haul and push it over the snag, and by clinging to the logs we could keep the head straight for the rushing water, and get through. Each was assigned his part. It was a critical moment, and even Vanka turned pale, dusky as he was; but a heave and a turn and a rapid stroke or two, and we were beyond the danger. Within two or three minutes we had emerged on to the main stream of the Tim, several lengths ahead of our competitors. Then Vanka gave way to his joy of triumph, and declared that our salvation from a watery grave and our success in the race was due to *Tol ni vookh* and to the efficacy of his offering; for at our last halt he had sprinkled a little tobacco on the ashes of our fire, whereas the other crew had not. The Gilyak, like a child, trusts blindly in a beneficent result from his offering, and surely his prayer—his only prayer, *Kiskh ni much*, God give (made sitting on his heels facing his offering)—is not unanswered. He begins to be more hopeful, jolly and patient, and what more than this is needed in hunting? Try to cause a Gilyak to disbelieve in the

efficacy of his offering, and he will recite to you scores of names of those who were lazy and omitted to perform the usual rites in hunting, and were unsuccessful. To quote the words of one of them, "Once I ran away from a bear. That happened because I forgot to give an offering to the god. The god sent fear into my heart—and the skin of a bear is worth ten or fifteen rubles. I was too frightened to turn back and spear the beast as I had done many a time before. I was afraid because I knew that the god had sent him on purpose to remind me of my insult to him. Oh how frightful it was. No, the offering is *very* good. You are light-hearted and have no fear!"

We had just lighted our camp-fire that night when the sound of a distant shot sent us running for our guns; but Vanka assured us it was only Armunka's brother about a mile up the river shooting a bear. How they knew, except by a process of Gilyak logic, I do not know; but an hour or so later a short cough, followed by two canoes shooting round the bend of the river, announced the arrival of four Gilyaks, of whom one was Armunka's brother. They joined our company round the fire, and the brother of the great hunter proceeded to tell how he had seen a bear drinking by the river's edge, and had wounded him in the side; but in the darkness it was out of the question to follow him up, and therefore he would resume the hunt in the morning.

That night was very cold and frosty. The next day broke clear and sunny. The proposed bear-tracking was a great temptation, and, though time was pressing, I proposed to join our party of four to that of Armunka's brother. The five Gilyaks, who were bent on purchasing a bear, now left us to pursue their journey. Priming our guns, we landed at the spot where Bruin's foot-marks were still visible. My interpreter had a Gilyak bear-spear and revolver, I had a small-bore rifle, and the seven Gilyaks had two spears and three old rifles between them.

OFF TO THE BEAR-HUNT. [*To face page* 294.

Clambering up a steep and high bank, grasping tree-stems with which to haul ourselves up, we followed the natives through the *taiga*. The forest was thick with elder, ash and mountain-ash, birch, poplar, and larch, and a dense undergrowth of wild-rose, spiræa, and whortle-berries. Great giants of the forest lay fallen at every three or four steps, and our progress was a crashing through scrub, clambering over fallen trunks, and leaping into mossy dells, many of the latter having been unmistakably the resting-places of bears. The trees were naturally tall, as they grew so thickly, and one fallen larch, which I measured by stepping, was noted in my diary as 145 feet long.

The natives were very quick in following up the tracks. A red stain on a leaf as Bruin brushed by, a patch on the green moss where he had rested, or a mark on a tree where, in his pain, he had tried to rub away the irritation, every sign was quickly noted. At length, however, even they came to an end of their reading of bear-prints. A circle was formed, and we searched in ever-widening range, but not a trace could be found. They decided that it must be given up; but learning that there was a Gilyak village at no great distance up the river, I insisted on their sending for the dogs. We therefore returned guided through the jungle by the natives, to our canoe, had a frugal midday meal, and started out once more with the dogs and a reinforcement of one or two old men and four guns. Now we had to restrain our ardour, and not press forward, but let the dogs find the scent. Their barking would be the signal of their coming up with the bear. The dogs ran hither and thither, and we watched and strained our eyes and ears, holding ourself in readiness to follow up as quickly as the obstacles in our path would allow us. Suddenly the sound of a shot rang through the forest, and hastening forward, to my disappointment, we came upon an old

Gilyak who had shot a *teterev*, a capercailzie (*Tetrao urogallus*). Another false alarm, this time from dogs, and nothing further happened until our natives, coming in from different directions, brought news that the bear had not been so severely wounded as they thought. He had gone a great distance, and it might take a day or two before we could come up with him, and so reluctantly we had to give up the hunt.

The autumn is not, of course, the season for bear-hunting, since Bruin has only his poor summer-coat on, which is of small value as fur. Early spring is the best time, though hunger or venturous hunters may rouse him from his torpor in mid-winter. When he comes forth from his cave, half awake, and driven by the smoke of a fire kindled in front, or by the sticks and stones of the hunters, one of the surrounding circle of Gilyaks lets fly an arrow at him, or the whole party attempt to drive him down a favourite track, where is placed a *yu-ru* (an automatic bow and arrow). As his foot touches the cord the iron-pointed arrow is released and pierces his side. With a snarl of pain he turns on his pursuers, who scatter in all directions, some climbing trees. One, however, is too late, and the bear is upon him, and has him already in his deadly embrace. The unfortunate victim's companions approach and try to attract the beast's attention. They worry him with sticks and stones, and when he drops the unfortunate man, one of them stands unflinchingly waiting the onslaught of the infuriated animal. It seems madness to stand thus, for he makes no attempt to thrust at Bruin with his spear; but it would be useless to do so, for he knows too well that the bear is a master at the art of parrying. He holds his spear apparently quite harmlessly, for the shaft rests on the ground behind him, and the point on a level with his chest is hidden beneath his tunic. It is a terribly anxious moment. How can the man escape? The raging beast is now flinging himself

upon him. All hope is gone. But no. What has happened? The bear is wounded and the man is safe, for as the animal hurled himself at the hunter, the latter, in the twinkling of an eye, stepped back a pace without moving the spear, and the great beast impaled himself upon it. The animal is still very dangerous; but his movements are impeded by the spear. On the shaft is a crescent-shaped piece of iron, for such is Bruin's cunning that he is said sometimes to push the spear further through his body so that it may not hinder him in his angry pursuit of the hunters. His efforts now grow weaker from loss of blood, and finally he sinks down dead.

The real bear-hunting season is rather later. As soon as the snow begins to thaw, and the tiny streams are let loose in the high valleys, the chief inhabitant of the forest emerges from his winter's sleep and seeks food, going backwards and forwards among the mountains. This is the opportunity of the native hunters. The Gilyaks discover his favourite routes, and set their *yu-ru*. An unsuspecting beast trips over the cord, which lets fly the arrow automatically, and wounds, but does not kill him. Nevertheless, he leaves his bloody tracks, and the hunters, following these up, worry him until, exhausted, he falls a prey to an archer or the owner of an old shot-gun. The carcase is then drawn on a sledge to their village, and after two or three days a feast is held. During the winter such a lucky find is a welcome addition to their *menu*, to say nothing of the prospective value of the skin.

In addition to the bear, there are three other of the larger beasts which are welcome prey to the Gilyak hunters, the musk deer (*Moschus moschiferus*), the fox (*Canis vulpes*), and the reindeer (*Cervus tarandus*).

On the tops of the mountains the native finds the *kabaga*, as the Russians call the *Moschus moschiferus*, a very small species of which is found on Sakhalin. Those I have seen were about the size of a half-grown kid, and had two tusks,

similar to a wild boar's. Such is its agility in springing from rock to rock, and its deftness in running along ledges which yield room only for its tiny hoofs, that the Gilyak knows, with all his skill and experience, it is impossible to catch it in pursuit. He therefore sets snares, and, having observed that this little animal has exceptionally cleanly and regular habits, he is able to make sure of the track, and to snare it.

About the same time of the year is set the *kas-ma*, or fox-trap, and this is particularly interesting from its extraordinary simplicity. The Gilyak takes a stick with a fork in it, and cuts it very carefully to the required length. In the fork of this piece he ties a piece of flesh, wrapped in a rag to prevent the birds eating it. Master Reynard, coming along, suddenly feels the pangs of hunger especially poignant as his eyes fall on the meat. How good it smells! Cautiously approaching, and raising himself hesitatingly on his hind-legs, he sniffs, and tries in vain to reach the bait with his mouth. It is too high. He then tries with his paw, but the meat is firmly tied. Fairly roused now, he tries again and again until, with a great effort, he "o'er reaches himself," and lands his paw in the fork of the stick and cannot withdraw it. There he stands, helpless, with his paw up, until the Gilyak comes to examine his traps. Poor Reynard! His position is so ludicrous that one cannot help laughing at him.

It reminds one of the description of his favourite preacher by an enthusiastic admirer. He wished to impress his hearer with the soundness, as well as the spiritual eloquence, of the minister, and pictured him to his delighted auditor as "having one foot planted firmly on the earth, while with the other he pointed to heaven!"

All these traps and snares of the Gilyaks are of use in calm weather, especially at the beginning and end of winter, when the snow-covering is yet thin, but with the arrival of storms, snares and tracks are covered up. The native has

learnt to know Nature in all her moods, and, recognizing the approach of a gale, gathers up his traps before they shall be lost, vowing in his heart that even the storms shall yield their prey.

The sky is already wrapped in swaddling clothes of snow. The north wind blows, and sweeps through the forest with howls; blast after blast succeeds, and clouds of driven snow whirl by. The *buran* is upon him, and he knows it will endure for a long time with its bitter cold. A group of reindeer is huddled together on the borders of the forest. They are standing with their heads to the ground, for even they are cold to the bone. Blinded by the snow, their keen sight and power of smell having failed them in this weather, they have forgotten all caution, yet stand shivering and trembling in fear of bear or man. But what is happening? There is a slight stir. They have seen some dark objects, and in a momentary lull of the storm have fled helter-skelter into the forest. Their hoofs sink deep into the snow, and, distracted by fear, their antlers do not clear the trees with the unerring dexterity of calmer moments. Dark figures, in shaggy skins, glide like lightning after them. For long have they tracked this herd on *skis*, and waited just this opportunity of the *buran* to catch them. Each hunter has a knife in his hand. To shoot in this weather, and while running, is impossible, but a good knife will not betray him.

Suddenly a whitish-grey great buck is caught, Absalom-wise, in a tree, and struggles in vain to free himself. Like a bird the wild man is up with it, and, catching it by the antlers, stabs it under the shoulder. With a gasp the animal falls, and the hunter, quickly stripping off the skin, sits quietly down and begins to feast. He was born, and has his home, in the *buran*.

CHAPTER XVI

A RIDE THROUGH THE "TAIGA"

Irr Kirr—The bears' constitutional—A salmon for 1*d.*—Ado Tim—The difficulties of riding in a *telyega*—Miserable settlements—An exciting ride—The 19th of the month—Rikovsk prison—Sophie Blüffstein—An extraordinary career—Refuge from a storm—A convict home.

LATER in the afternoon of the bear tracking we arrived at the village of Irr Kirr, the home of Armunka. It was with some expectation that we had looked forward to meeting the family, and seeing the home and possessions of so renowned a hunter and scion of a noble house. We were disappointed, however, for nothing about the establishment or family, so far as we could see, denoted its proud position. The hut was of very moderate size, and rather scantily garnished with the usual medley of snares, skins, and domestic utensils.

The paternal acres were not to be seen, for of the possession of land in our sense of the word the Gilyaks have no conception. The nearest approach to it was a prescriptive right, sanctioned by immemorial custom, to place snares along certain creeks. The right of all to roam over the land in hunting was freely recognized; but they would have resented the placing of snares in chosen creeks and backwaters by the Tungus and Orochons, although, rather than provoke hostilities, they would have simply gone elsewhere. As among themselves, the division of the creeks and tracks for snaring had been made in olden

times; and the customary boundaries sanctioned by time are seldom transgressed. The abundance of game, coupled with the prowess of the pioneers, yielded little cause for quarrel, and spots were simply annexed according to the number of snares which the owner of the hut possessed. Here and there a dispute arose, and was settled by reference to the *klenu*, the elders in council, or by duels. In the latter case the disputants fought with a weapon like a hedge-bill, with a straight blade; but as they were always surrounded by a goodly concourse, the combatants were parted when either became exhausted, and the duel was not allowed to have a fatal ending.

Of the inhabitants of the hut, neither the father of Armunka nor his sister were in any way striking, but his younger brother drew our attention on account of his delicate, almost girlish features, the effect of which was heightened perhaps in the eyes of a Westerner by the hairlessness of his face and the wearing of his hair in a queue. The wealth of the family consisted in the possession of several bears; and as I was desirous of seeing these creatures brought out for their constitutional, I suggested that it was high time they had a walk. Here, however, as at the village where we had called the evening before, the men were mostly away; and the remainder pleaded an insufficient force to tackle Bruin. Nevertheless, for half a ruble they agreed to get out two of the three-months-old cubs.

Armunka and Vanka joined the party, and a few of the roofing-logs having been removed from the cage, and nooses of thongs having been let in and cleverly looped round the animals' necks, two of the men began to haul. Unlike the adult bears, which eagerly scramble out, the cubs were somewhat frightened at first, struggled, and got the noose uncomfortably tight so that one of the Gilyaks had to come forward and warily assist them out from behind.

When once out, they lost all sense of fear, and became frantically angry and spiteful. Held by four men, two to

each, they snarled and scratched and turned somersaults in their attempts to get at us; and forced us to retire again and again before their threatened onslaughts. After they had been photographed, as it was growing dusk, the Gilyaks proceeded to get them back into their cage. It was no easy matter, but an experienced elder coming up at the critical moment, seized them one at a time just behind the ears, and before they could scratch the cubs found themselves on the floor of the cage. Having bartered for two fine, but headless, dog-skins, whose owners had probably been sacrificed at the bear festival or a funeral, we embarked again, and paddled on past many shoals, now redolent of dead fish cast up from the spawning hosts, in search of a camping-ground.

The next morning found Vanka in excellent spirits, and anxious to further his education. The English language as indulged in by me, had already excited his curiosity, and he had mastered the English words for the Russian *medviet* (bear) and *riba* (fish), and now he asked, pointing upwards, what was the English for *solntse* (sun) and *luna* (moon). The Russian custom of addressing a person by his patronymic, and only officially by his surname, or as they say, family name, is probably familiar to the reader. Vanka having forgotten, after a few minutes' paddling, the new English words we had taught him, stopped, leaned forward and asked, "I forget, what did you say was the family name of the *solntse* (sun)?"

This day we halted at Vanka's native village, *Kherivo*, where his mother came down to greet him. There was apparently no outward sign of affection between them, but the race is undemonstrative, and as I have already said, does not salute. He fetched some more seal-oil, and resumed the journey almost immediately.

For the last two days our larder had been low, we had seen no ducks, and the capercailzie shot in the *taiga* by the old Gilyak, and bought by us for half a pound of

tobacco, had sufficed for one meal; and for the rest boiled rice and brick-tea did duty. We therefore hailed with joy, on the third day, a native canoe with an unexpected catch of *kita,* the last of the season. Vanka, without a moment's delay, whipped off the head of one, and was greedily devouring it while we, choosing another, weighing about 18 or 20 lbs., paid the modest sum of four kopyeks (1*d.*) for it.

We were now nearing Ado Tim, the village whence we had started to descend the river with the Russian ex-convicts. Our crew had agreed to take us thus far, but for the twenty miles to Slavo, which we had done on our outward journey by canoe, we must arrange as best we could.

At 5 p.m. we landed at the already familiar spot, with the prospect, after many cold nights on the river-bank, of a comfortable night in the hut of Madame Gregoriev and her "man." The Russian settlement lying a little distance from the river, and our baggage being considerable, two journeys had to be made. I elected to stay and guard half of it, while the others carried off the other half and warned our hostess of our arrival.

Standing thus alone and gazing around on the scene, I was impressed with the beauty, rather than the wildness of it; for the untamedness of the scenery had been the dominant note of all we had seen during the last three weeks. Beyond the river stretched a wooded level, and back of this rose the hills, thickly clad and gay with autumn tints, and away behind all stood up the purple mountains, crowned here and there with snowy whiteness. The sky was a clear blue, flushed with the rose of sunset, and a stillness rested on the scene broken only by the plash of salmon leaping from the silvery surface of the river. There was nothing to spoil the beauty and restfulness of the whole, save the poverty-stricken settlement of criminals yonder.

A Russian official on the island, who had travelled, remarked to me once, "If the English or Americans had had this island, what would they not have made of it?"

And now, as I stood on the banks of the Tim, I saw in my mind's eye before me a hill-station in India. Yonder wooded plain was now a smooth shaven level where sports of all kinds were going on, girdled by the smiling river, in which and on which bathers, anglers, and canoers were disporting themselves. The wooded slopes were dotted with the bungalows of the Governor and chief officials, and last, but not least, the village behind me was no longer plunged in poverty and crime.

Why was it not so? The Russians would reply that they could not afford it, their pay is so small; and this has come to be popularly accepted as an axiom, but when it is investigated, and allowances are made for the cheap cost of living, the free education of their children—even through the university—the convict labour that is often theirs for the asking on Sakhalin, I think there is not very much in it. But if I yield the point for the sake of argument, the amount of money spent on champagne, gambled away at cards and spent in ways not to be mentioned, would in most cases allow of the change to the "hills." The sporting instinct is not however Russian, and in this they know not how much they lose. If it has done so much for us in India in keeping life sane, it is needed not only in Siberia, but in Russia itself, where provincial life is stagnant, and villages being separated by great distances, the life of the officials is monotonous beyond measure.

Half an hour later saw us comfortably settled in the hut of our ex-convict host and hostess, where we had been expected two or three days previously. All our doings, how much we had paid in rice, tobacco, etc., for this article and for that, were common knowledge, the news having travelled in that mysterious manner and with that extraordinary rapidity common among natives.

Madame Gregoriev was soon in a whirl of preparations befitting the status of her guests. It was the season of the potato crop, and she had been busy since early morning in digging and carrying her crop to the hut. Dropping on her knees in her great top-boots, she lifted a trap-door in the floor and displayed a store of hundreds of puds. She had that day, so she told us, dug up no less than twenty puds (722 lbs.). With pride she declared, "I am from Little Russia. I work hard. I dig all around and beneath the plants. I don't only scratch so (suiting the action to the word), as the Great Russians do, and that is why I get so many!"

While supper was preparing, my interpreter, whose boots had suffered during a three weeks' absence of blacking, inquired whether there was a cobbler in the village. "Yes," replied Madame G., "but I would not trust him with one of your boots to-night, for he is playing cards!" This was always one of the difficulties that met one, whether in Alexandrovsk or in the smaller settlements, the uncertainty of getting any article back that was taken to be repaired or sent as a pattern. Frequently the craftsman was too poor, or, at least, said he was, to buy the required material, and there was no way out of it but to add to the risk and make him a small advance of cash. The most unlikely articles came in handy in gambling, and money was by no means indispensable—clothes, rations, and even "futures" being staked. Walking at night through Alexandrovsk, I have often seen the flickering lights from huts on the outskirts, where the gamblers, both men and women, were busy. A woman will go dressed in half a dozen coats, and stake and lose them, one by one, at the game. Not only so, but even the officials' property, either stolen or left for repair, will disappear in this way, and there is no redress. The man can be put into prison, but that does not produce the article or the money.

While we were awaiting supper, Vanka turned up to

receive payment for his services. He had had some advances, and there remained twenty-one rubles to pay him. Sitting on the window-sill together, I counted out, in Russian, seven three-ruble notes. It naturally took him some considerable time to verify the amount, and then, having assured himself that it was correct, he began to portion out, in prospective, various sums for luxuries and necessaries. Two of the notes were for vodka, one was for rice, and another for gunpowder. To my astonishment he drew forth a Russian purse, and began to place in separate divisions the notes assigned for the different purchases. This was a very serious business, for I was told that, when he came to make his purchases in the course of a day or two, there would be great trouble, a terrible racking of brains, to remember which ruble note had been assigned to the particular purpose. It was probable that in the end he would have to give up the solution of the problem and start afresh.

At present, however, he was in high spirits, for two or three days since there had been a bear-hunt by his friends of Ado Tim, in which a dam and two cubs had fallen to their prowess. One old Gilyak described to me how the hunt had gone. Starting out with the dogs, they had come up with the *ch'uff* and cubs in the forest, and the dogs immediately began to worry the cubs, biting at their hind-legs until the mother bear called to them to "take care," and run up a tree. This they did, but, meanwhile, the dam was shot. An experienced hunter then proceeded to follow the cubs with a seal-hide noose in his hand. With this he lassoed them, and, descending, forced them to climb down by degrees. The carcase of the dead animal was then placed upon a sledge drawn by the dogs, and the orphaned cubs were led, pushed, and dragged to the village. Hence on the morrow there was to be a great holiday fête, and Gilyaks from all around were coming in to celebrate it.

Before retiring to rest that night our host and hostess, with true politeness, offered to lend us their bed, and to sleep in the next "room." Our curiosity was aroused as to where this other room could be, but we were soon enlightened when opening a tiny door near the stove, we heard the unmistakable remarks, in the bass, of pigs!

To reach Alexandrovsk from Ado Tim it was necessary to go first to Slavo, and thence to Derbensk, whence we could post the rest of the way, There were no posting arrangements between Ado Tim and Derbensk, a distance of forty-three versts, and, considering that it was for the most part a mere forest track, it was scarcely to be expected. The officials, however, sometimes got horses sent on to Ado Tim, and the police-officer whom we had overtaken and passed gave us permission to use the horses he was expecting; but these never arrived, and the question of transport once more stared us in the face. Money, however, had not lost its power, and the offer of twelve rubles was sufficient to provide a solution.

The day before, on our way up the river, some miles below Ado Tim, we had seen some semi-wild ponies loose in the forest. I had been surprised at this, because of the neighbourhood of bears, but the sturdy little animals had their methods of defence. They found their safety in co-operation, like their masters, who must have their *artel.* Keeping always near together at the scent of danger, they form up in a ring, heels outwards, with the foals in the centre, and lunge out at the approaching intruder.

It was proposed that the villagers should send into the forest and catch a couple of these animals. Meanwhile a *telyega*, or rough cart, was forthcoming, and a son of one of the convicts proposed to drive us as far as Derbensk. In the marvellously short time of two hours the ponies had been captured and brought to the village, and, apparently desirous that we should not underrate their powers, had overturned the *telyega* in a ditch in front of the hut.

I am tempted here to turn aside and write a dissertation on how to pack a *telyega*, or on how *not* to pack one, in case the reader should be meditating a trip into the wilds of Eastern Siberia; but I will relent, and only let him have my experience. In the first place, the Sakhalin *telyegá* is only a skeleton of half a boat on four wheels—very shallow, and, of course, without springs. Into this had to be packed all our luggage, our two selves, and the driver. We began by duly placing all our chattels in the available space, which was, unfortunately, so shallow that they overtopped it. Remembering the solemn warnings of the Siberian travellers that it is not upon the vehicle, but upon one's baggage one must rely for a seat, we could not but regard this arrangement as satisfactory and *en règle*. All unsuspicious of the difficulties that awaited us, we mounted. So long as the cart remained still our position was passably comfortable. It is true there was no back, and we were a bit cramped, but such things were only to be expected. It was a different story, however, when the ponies began to move. We were sitting on two rounded hills, from which we threatened to shoot off at any moment. We tried sitting up, drawing our knees up so as to allow space for the driver to squat, and holding on to anything stable to support ourselves. The difficulty was that our road was a mere forest track, and the lurch and tilt of the vessel over tree-roots, in and out of deep ruts, were the normal signs of progress. We called a halt, altered the position of our baggage, and tried lying down, but it was somewhat like an attempt to lie on the top of an unstable ball.

We lay back, arm in arm, balancing uneasily, and shouting to each other in warning against the approaching dangers of rut and root. Five times we halted to re-arrange and adopt some new method of adhesion; at the same time not neglecting to speculate on the best mode of rolling off so as to clear the wheels.

The axles of the cart were of wood, the poles of freshly hewn pine, with the bark still adhering, and the harness of rope. The track was simply a narrow way cleared by fire, and so rough that, our spirited steeds notwithstanding, the first twenty versts (13½ miles) took five hours, a speed of barely two and three-quarter miles an hour. The forest scenery was wild, but beautiful, the larch-trees with their brilliant green and the birches paling to autumn gold standing out in clear relief against the black pines. Passionate red leaves, deepening to purple, lit up the undergrowth of spiræa, mountain-ash, elder, and wild rose; black charred pine-stumps told of the recent making of the track, and in the distance were easily mistaken, at first sight, for bears.

Once or twice we passed a clearing, or rather a poor attempt at a clearing, where stood a settlement of a few log-huts and some rough meadow-land, almost in a virgin state. One of them contained only six inhabitants, all men. The huts were about twelve by eighteen feet in size, the log walls letting in the cold through the crevices; and the miserable roofs of loose pieces of bark, with a hole for chimney, offering poor protection against the rain. Inside one would find a table, some boxes for a bed, and a home-made stove; the whole faintly lighted by a small paper-mended window. It was a mystery how these poor people managed to live, and indeed it was from such places that the gangs of *brodyagi* were recruited. A few grew potatoes, and in the larger settlements a "wealthy" settler will own some cows or two or three ponies. Potatoes had to be bartered for flour, tea, and rice; and for fish to be salted against the winter. Some, even by much scraping, were unable to compass this, and, having borrowed in the first place seed-potatoes or corn, etc., from the Crown, sank, in company with the lazy or hopeless, deeper and deeper into debt. In the villages that are large enough to have a store, the shopkeeper is generally the rich man and the

money-lender. There is then nobody to prevent him refusing to supply goods, if he has some petty spite to avenge, or compelling the "peasant" to give twice the usual quantity of potatoes in exchange for flour, rice, or salt.

The poor "exile-settler" is also at the mercy of any official who may choose to tyrannize over him, and unfortunately for those in the Alexandrovsk *okrug*, the *smotritel poselenie*, or Chief of the exile department, was a man of very bad repute. It is not surprising therefore that in many cases not only was the newly made exile sent to spots unsuitable for the cultivation with which he was familiar, as a Caucasian to lowlands and a Great Russian to hilly country, but in many cases to swamps where existence was impossible. So far away were some of these spots that no stores, not even those due to them as rations for the first two years, could ever reach them. One, whose authority on the island was unquestioned, not only confirmed this, but gave an instance of one settlement which was so surrounded by swamps that no one could get to or from it for two whole years. I leave the reader to picture the condition of these poor wretches, who had to depend upon potatoes and berries for food, and ragged clothing for protection against a winter's cold reaching to 40° and 50° below zero.

Slavo was not reached until four o'clock, and though we had further to go than we had already come, a short halt was called to eat a meal and partially dry our clothes. It had rained for the last two or three hours, and we were cramped, cold, and wet. Choosing a house which looked less poverty-stricken than the rest, we sent our driver to inquire if we might drink tea there, and permission being readily accorded, wet, muddy, and bedraggled we entered, taking our provisions with us. In the kitchen were two or three women and children, and we waited there while the usual preliminary for a stranger, the hasty sweeping out

of the best room, was gone through. The "best" room, the only one besides the kitchen, did duty as bed, sitting, and dining room, and contained a cradle, a gun, a table, two or three chairs, a *shuba* or two hanging from pegs, and the usual prints of the Tsar and Tsaritsa, with the additional mural decoration of a picture symbolizing the progress of man from the cradle to the grave.

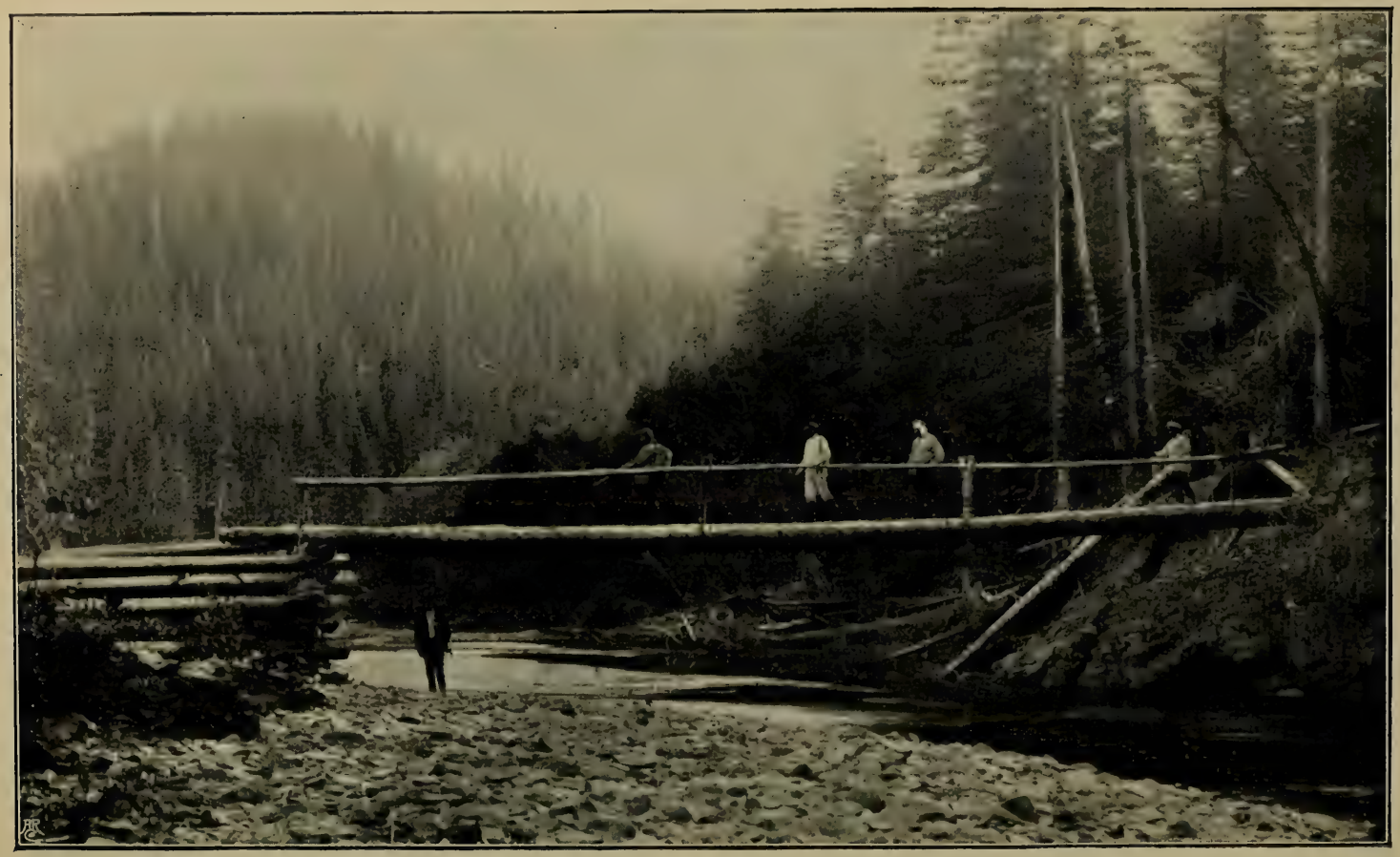
Warmed within and cleaned without, for the hostess had poured a pail of water over me in order to get rid of superfluous mud, we started again for Derbensk, twenty-three versts distant. We might have known that it was impossible to reach it at the pace we were going; but what was to be done? Our only thought was to push on, but we had inadequately estimated the difficulties. Our driver, an inexperienced youth of about nineteen, grew seriously alarmed; he had not contemplated being on the road after dark, and had hoped to have reached Derbensk before dusk. Rain continued to fall; the road was difficult, and above all the bridges were a source of fright to the ponies, for the loose pine-poles, laid on the simple framework of a bridge, shifted and thundered under their feet. The heavens clouded and darkness fell early; the forest grew denser and denser, and our *yamshtchik*, the son of a convict himself, became more and more nervous.

He had not bargained for this. We had been lolling in the least uncomfortable positions we could assume, holding on at critical points; and now he begged us, "Will the *barini* sit up, back to back, facing each into the forest, and shoot the moment that they see anything move," while he declared in anxious tones that he would do his best to keep his scared animals in hand. That did not promise much, for he was a poor driver, and had little control over his half-savage horses. At a miserable crawl of three miles an hour, we could place no hope in the swiftness of our steeds. The road was dangerous

enough from *brodyagi* even by day, and our return had been expected for two or three days.

A free fight in the open or by daylight, when you could see your opponent, was one thing, but this was quite another. It was anything but a comfortable sensation to feel that you might be picked off from any point in this blank darkness without being able to single out your assailant. To shoot at a moving object was easy, for what doesn't move under such circumstances? But in the blackness it was difficult to make out anything definitely a few yards away, though we peered alternately into the forest and back along the track. Unpleasant as it was awaiting the chances of being shot, I think, if I must confess, I disliked more the navigation of the bridges that followed. These were convict-made with pine-poles for supports, cross-pieces, and flooring. The last consisted, as I have said, of poles just laid on the cross-pieces. To add to the simplicity of the structure there was no rail, and should the horses swerve to either side, a tilting of the poles would land us, cart, baggage and all, in the mountain-stream below. There was not wanting a further addition to the excitement of negotiating these "bridges." No attempt had been made at graduating the steep sides of the ravines, and our primitive vehicle boasted no brake. There was, therefore, nothing to be done but to let go full speed down the steeps, and take the bridge at a gallop in order to surmount the slopes on the other side. It was more than exciting, calculating the chances, at express speed, of our striking the middle of the bridge which lay below, shrouded in darkness. Two hours of this exhilarating kind of travel brought us to the settlement of Uskovo. This was a village rather larger than the usual, containing about two hundred souls, and we decided to try and find shelter there.

Compared with the flickering dips in the other cottages, the first house of the village was aglow with light, and



A SAKHALIN BRIDGE. [*To face page* 312.

rightly guessing that it was the overseer's, we found him full of alacrity in offering hospitality to the "eminent travellers." Our driver was stowed in a loft, and we were led into the family sitting and bedroom, where a stove was quickly lighted, and our wet clothes and rugs hung up to dry. Even the accommodation at the Waldorf Astoria could not compare with the luxury that night of a warm room, a supper of black bread and butter, and a bed of hay on the floor.

Our host enjoyed the magnificent salary of twenty-five rubles (2½ guineas) per month, and was responsible, as already mentioned, for the multitudinous duties of the administration and policing of his district.

The cottage was bare and poor-looking according to an English labourer's notions, but by the peasants of the village regarded as a well-to-do home. There was only one bed in the room, on which the overseer and his wife slept, while their child lay upon a couple of chairs; and when in the morning I paid them three rubles for our supper, bed, and breakfast, they were overjoyed at the largeness of the sum.

I had proposed to give them a five-ruble note and ask for change, but my intrepreter stopped me, saying—

"It is the nineteenth of the month."

"What do you mean?"

"Why," replied he, "the twentieth is pay-day, and didn't you notice that they took out the last spoonful of tea at breakfast?"

Uskovo was considered a fairly well-to-do, in fact, a large village, but the overseer plumbed its poverty when he said, with much impressiveness, "The store has actually no sweets whatever for the children!"

Opposite our host's, at the entrance to the village, in the green space where the road was understood to be, was a wooden cross, protected by a tiny triangular fence. This was the sacred spot of the village. As in the early Saxon

days in England, a cross marked the place where the priest came occasionally from the minster or Mother Church, to hold service in outlying districts, so it was here. Very seldom, perhaps once or twice in the year, a Russian priest passed this way and read the service at this spot. If he happen to come on St. George's Day (April 23, O.S.), he takes his stand by the cross and sprinkles the cows with holy water, as they go out to pasture for the first time in the season.

From Uskovo the journey to Derbensk was accomplished before midday. Here we were welcomed by the ex-overseer, with whom we had previously stayed; and furbishing ourselves up as best we might, we posted south for fifteen versts to pay our promised visit to the Chief of the Timovsk district at Rikovsk.

A beautiful day had succeeded the storm of the previous day, and the change from the crawling *telyega* to a galloping *troika*, covering the ten miles in just over the hour on a very rough road, was most delightful. Several convoys of provisions, drawn by oxen and guarded by soldiers, were overtaken; indeed our *izvostchik* seemed to think that everything had to be passed, whether we went into the ditches to do it or not; and was only held back by the "*tishe, tishe!*" (gently, gently!) of my companion. Rikovsk, our destination, is the centre of administration of the Timovsk *okrug*, one of the three districts into which the island is divided. The most prominent buildings are the fine wooden church, built by the convicts, a large prison, and the house of the chief. This official ranks as the third or fourth man on the island, being responsible, like his brother officers of the Alexandrovsk and Korsakovsk *okrugi*, to the Governor only. We found him entertaining several guests—officials—but he welcomed us, and we all sat down to a table surprisingly well-spread for Sakhalin. The Russians are excellent makers of soup, though a Westerner finds this course, unlike his own, a meal in itself.

The same may be said of their *zakuska*, or preliminary course of *hors d'œuvres*. Side dishes of delicacies, anchovies, bacon, sardines, *ikra* (caviare), etc., freely partaken of as the Russians do, would satisfy any ordinary Englishman, before he entered upon the more serious portion of the meal. After dinner, talk ran upon the native races which inhabited the district ruled over by our host, their origin, numbers, the causes of their dying out, etc. In the course of the discussion of this last point a younger official, who became interested, suggested that the Russians had been responsible for introducing small-pox and diphtheria. Whereupon the chief angrily quashed him with, "The Englishman must not know that, or he will write about it." It was not therefore likely, when the Chief himself offered to take me over the prison, that I should be shown the worst side of things; in fact, the same under-official suggested my visiting a portion of the older prison, but the idea was immediately scouted. First we entered the new portion, which contained the single cells, an innovation which the Chief took some responsibility for, and was evidently proud of. Certainly everything in this portion of the prison was up-to-date. The prisoners had better and cleaner accommodation than I had yet seen, including a flap-table, flap-plank bed, and a stool, and were even allowed an hour's exercise a day unless there were many of them, in which case it was cut down to half an hour.

Yet this single-cell system, which was the new and improved method to be adopted throughout the Empire, was by no means a satisfactory solution of the difficult penal question. It might be better than the indiscriminate mixing in the *kameri* if work, productive work, were allowed them out of the cells; but the long weary years of confinement, the terrible *ennui*, more especially to an unlettered person who could not avail himself of the scanty literature of the prison library, were these likely to reform the

criminal? It would be indeed a miracle if he emerged sane.

One of these we saw. He was under sentence of twenty years, which might be shortened a little by good behaviour, doubtful in his case, or by a Manifesto of the Tsar on some great Imperial event. He was one of the Barratasvili band, indeed the only one who had not been executed.

Our party, including the gaolers, clanked along the corridor, and brought up suddenly at one of the ominous-looking doors. Uncovering the grille, the chief, who was a very big man, peered in, the warder warning him that the prisoner was dangerous. The *nachalnik*, with perhaps pardonable show of courage, ordered the gaoler to unlock and unbolt the door; and I had a glance at the prisoner, sullen and dreadfully pallid, cowering like a wild beast. Despite another warning from the warder, his superior entered, and was locked in for two or three minutes with the prisoner.

Another, whom I was shown, was a member of a gang of five pictured in the illustration, who had attacked and murdered three soldiers camping in a shelter in the forest. This one, who is on the extreme right in the picture, alone escaped hanging. Yet another was pointed out to me who, having previously escaped from prison, presented himself boldly in broad daylight at a house in Alexandrovsk, which was temporarily in charge of a soldier. He said he had been sent by the *kappellmeister* for the musical instruments, but before the soldier had time to reply the *brodyaga* had felled him with an axe or a club. Finishing his ghastly work with a knife, the murderer dragged the corpse to a trap-door in the floor, and dropped it into the potato-cellar. This happened about midday, and the baker calling shortly afterwards, and spying blood on the floor as he came in to deposit the loaf, immediately suspected foul play, and shouted, "Help, help!" Two men hurried up in answer to his cries,

A GANG OF MURDERERS, OF WHOM THE FOUR TO THE LEFT WERE HANGED.

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and held the doors. The prisoner then made for a window, but the Military Governor (predecessor of the present) was passing at the time, and seeing a disturbance, ran up just in time to receive the prisoner as he leaped through the window.

On the whole the prisoners were fortunate in having Mr. S. as the *nachalnik* of the district in which their prison lay. He was energetic, not unkindly disposed, and clear-headed enough to see through attempts to deceive him. Of his private life I do not intend to speak.

The following was told me by one who was no friend of his, and therefore carries the more weight. A political exile had been appointed school teacher in his district, and the chief arranged to pay him twenty-five rubles a month. The salary, like the rations given to an "exile-settler" in his first or second year, was payable at the end of the month. Any remonstrance, to the effect that a man might starve before that time, was met by the official reply that on the other hand, if the provisions or payment were made in advance, and the man died before the end of the month, the Crown would lose.

The chief, knowing the poverty of the political exile, ordered him to be paid fifteen rubles at the outset, and when the officials responsible urged that it was not safe, and that a receipt ought to be taken, replied, "Nonsense, dock five rubles a month off his salary until it is paid."

It is true that some of the prisoners in these single cells give their gaolers considerable trouble, but the cruel beatings that these same soldiers give on the sly cannot always be accounted for thus. The prisoners all wore a painfully cowed look, for the hand of the law does not stretch out to Sakhalin as it does nearer home. Less than a year previous the Chief of a Caucasian prison had beaten a man nearly to death. The *procureur* happened to visit this prison a week afterwards, and observing this prisoner evidently ill, asked why he was not in the infirmary. The

Chief replied that he had been well an hour previous. "For shame," called out the convict, "you know you yourself beat me, and nearly killed me a week ago." The doctor was called, and on examination the man was found to have three ribs broken; and the Chief of the prison was sentenced to hard labour.

The *procureur* and judges are thus able to interfere in favour of the prisoner or the accused, and the following is an instance of such on Sakhalin, and was told me by the thrifty and properous farmer of Uskovo. He was walking along the road one day, when he saw an old man being cruelly beaten by two soldiers. He watched them until he could stand it no longer, and then called out—

"What are you doing?"

They immediately left the old man, and coming up to him said, "Go!" "What do you mean?" he asked; but they only repeated more loudly, "Go, go!" at the same time threatening him with the butt-ends of their rifles. He remonstrated, and asked, "Where am I to go?" But by this time argument was of no avail, and he was forced to march straight ahead. Arrived at the prison they accused him of disobeying the authorities. The Chief of the prison would hear nothing from such a "turbulent fellow," and clapped him into gaol to await trial. He was then brought up before the Chief of the district, who no doubt saw through it, but in this case being very anxious, for private reasons not to be mentioned, to keep on good terms with the Chief of the prison, he reprimanded the man and remanded him for trial. Fortunately the judge, who arrived in due course from Vladivostok, was a clever, upright man, and he detected the fraud and dismissed the prisoner.

The itinerary judges visit Sakhalin once a year, in July; hence most of those poor wretches who had been arrested, and whom I saw herded together in a large bare room behind iron bars, would have to wait ten months before

their trial came on. It was a miserable and demoralizing company for those who were innocent. From this I went over to the *lazaret*, where the rooms were well warmed, lighted, and clean, and there were but few patients. One poor miserable wretch, suffering from a horrible disease, thinking I was a medical doctor, implored me to take him to some mineral spring.

In the course of the evening, for the Chief had hospitably dissuaded me from returning to Derbensk that day, the *nachalnik* of the prison called on Mr. S. to make up the report of the Crown lands. In England we are accustomed to look upon officially compiled statistics, however much their interpretation may differ, as unimpeachable. The traveller learns that the same implicit trust must be tempered with suspicion of party purposes in the Antipodes, but in Russia—well, the following illustrates the methods of compilation.

The prison-master proposed to write down twenty-two and a half *desyatini** as the Crown area under cultivation; but the Chief of the district said, "No, the Crown will expect too much from that, write it down as eighteen." As evening proceeded our host grew anxious, and not a little irritable, and I began to wonder if I were the unwitting cause. That was not so, however, but he was worrying over the delay in the arrival of the weekly mail from Alexandrovsk, already overdue, and was calculating the chances of it having been attacked. Such is the atmosphere of life on Sakhalin.

Rikovsk is famous as the erstwhile residence of a convict whose name, a generation ago, was known throughout Europe. Sophie Blüffstein, or the "Golden Hand," as she was called, was living here at Rikovsk in the early nineties. Hers was a remarkable career. Wan and thin from long confinement, the reader will scarcely credit, from the illustration, that she was once so beautiful

* A *desyatina* = 2·7 acres (nearly).

as to bewitch even her gaolers. It is more than thirty years ago since her escapades, which were to ring through Europe, began. She had married, it is said, one of her own race, a Jew, who was some sort of agent. His affairs early became entangled, and from that time forth she played her great *rôle*. Her stage was the capitals of Europe, and her first victims the great shopkeepers. Dressing up as befitted her assumed rank, and driving up in style to the chief shops, she would order jewellery, etc. to be sent to her address, which, needless to say, was a temporary one. Before this was discovered she and her husband were many hundreds of miles away; St. Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, and even London sheltering her in turn. She is said to have spent enormous sums of money, and to have gained a high position in the fashionable world. Young men were attracted by her beauty and her remarkable eyes. They fell dupes to her, and she is credited with decoying them and robbing them of their valuables. Her greatest triumph, however, was yet to come. Arrested and thrown into prison at Smolensk, she gained such influence over the overseer, that he not only connived at her escape, but, deserting wife and children, fled with her. She soon, however, threw him over, and returned to her old practices. Report has it that she was one night involved in one of these young men's parties which ended fatally, and, being arrested, was despatched to Siberia. Escaping again, she was re-captured, and deported to Sakhalin.

Her escapes by no means ended with her landing on the island. At first allowed to live out as a "free-command," so many and such serious deeds were laid to her account, though never proved, so cleverly had she matured her plans, that she was ultimately imprisoned in a single cell in the "testing" prison at Alexandrovsk. Before this she had leagued herself with many doubtful characters, whom she employed as her tools; and while yet at

THE FAMOUS SOPHIE BLUFFSTEIN, OR "GOLDEN HAND," BEING MANACLED.

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liberty she and another murdered a merchant with several thousand rubles upon him, down by the pirate vessel I have described. She buried the money, and it is reported that neither she nor any one else has been able to find the money since. Many other crimes, committed during the time she spent outside the prison walls, were believed to have owed their origin to her, and though the authorities could never bring them home, she was handcuffed and confined in the Alexandrovsk prison. Seven years previous to my visit she had regained her liberty in part, and was living at Rikovsk. The sequel is not generally known. She was ultimately allowed to go to Vladivostok, where she kept an inn until her death.

The post eventually arrived safely that night, though late; and the next morning we in our turn took the same route to Alexandrovsk. Reaching Derbensk in the course of the morning we once more packed up, and started at 1.30 for Alexandrovsk, thirty-five miles distant, being assured that we should find the tide favourable when we reached Arkovo. The scenery had changed its summer garb since we last passed over this road, and the autumn-tinted leaves were fast falling. At the first *stantsiya*, or little posting-inn, we found the chickens taken in for the winter and living under the dresser; yet I noticed with surprise, as we drank our tumblers of tea, a hydrangea and fuchsia in blossom in the window. Nothing occurred to stop us on our way until Arkovo was reached. We passed a few convicts loafing along the road, but we were well armed, and they could see it. Once, in the gathering darkness, we caught the flicker of a spark in the forest like the flash of a gun, followed by another, and we listened for the reports; but not a sound broke the stillness of the night, and, approaching the spot, we laughed to think that we had been deceived by a still smouldering tree-stump.

As we were nearing Arkovo the Third, where came our last change of horses, the *procureur*, in full uniform, passed us going inland. With him went one of our chances of fresh horses, but if nobody else had taken those he had brought from Alexandrovsk, we might have them after they had had a rest. In this we were disappointed, for when we reached the *stantsiya*, the Rikovsk doctor had engaged the remaining *kibitka* in which to follow the *procureur;* and a merchant had taken the other horses to return to Alexandrovsk. The whole inn was in a stir, and not without reason, for the merchant, who was the identical one who had befriended me on the night of my arrival, had been in a similar, or rather worse condition this evening. He had drunk so much champagne and vodka that, though he was reputed to do his business best when "muddled," on this occasion he had completely lost his head, and on reaching the inn, had fired three shots from his revolver as he sat in a chair. The fresh marks were there in the ceiling and walls when I came to occupy the same seat a few minutes after. Everybody had naturally fled for their lives, not knowing what such an irresponsible person might do. The doctor declared that he had done all he could, though he, naturally enough, had been considerably frightened. He declared that he had fled from Alexandrovsk because of the excessive drinking, which he could scarcely avoid without offence. I found him at the moment suspiciously over-amiable and spontaneous in his welcome, and full of protestations of the greatest friendship, and thus we parted, he to renew his journey, and we to await possibilities. The post-master announced that the horses were all out, and there was no *kibitka* available. This was doubly unfortunate, since the tide was rising, and every moment diminished our chances of being able to get through to Alexandrovsk. A little firmness resulted in the appearance, about an hour

later, of a rude *telyega* and a couple of peasants' horses. With a *troika*, under favourable conditions, we might have done the sixteen miles in a couple of hours, or two hours and a half, but with this poor substitute, which proceeded at the rate of three or four miles an hour, it was impossible, even if we breasted the tide, to reach Alexandrovsk until long after the place was asleep. Our prospects were not bright, for our previous place of abode in Alexandrovsk, we had been told, was occupied, and if the finding of a lodging—a safe lodging—by day were doubtful, it would be impossible after the inhabitants were abed. Nevertheless, we pushed on in a sort of blind way. To add to the unpleasantness of our situation, we had only heard the night before of the murder of the brother of our former landlady at Alexandrovsk, on the sands along which we were now to pass. After eighteen days his torn jacket had been found, and the watcher on the pirate ship had been arrested for the murder, his accomplice of the hut at the foot of the cliff being still at large.

Our way lay through a thickly clad valley, and the overhanging trees lining the roadside added to the blackness of a dark night. To carry a lantern would have been to invite attack, and yet I wondered how it was possible for our *yamshtchik* to find the way. Indeed, I rather think that the horses did it. Sitting back to back, as we had done two nights before, my interpreter and I kept a sharp look-out for moving objects, for we had again been warned by the police. The growing darkness was the precursor of a heavy storm, which descended upon us before we had got halfway to the beach. This storm, which, unknown to us then, favoured the designs of six convicts in the great prison at Alexandrovsk, proved kind to us also. It is ever on the night of a raging gale, under cover of the roar of the tempest, that the prisoners make their attempts at escape. These six, we learnt the next morning, had lassoed the tops of the fifteen-feet

stockade; and, clambering up and over, had dropped down and stolen away when the patrol was taking shelter in the sentry-box. Stealing along in the darkness and noise, they fled into the very forest which our sea-road skirted.

To us the storm came as the last straw, and seeing a hut by the wayside tenanted by a convict, whom my companion had known when he had been schoolmaster in the village, we sought refuge therein. The owner was a "free-command," and a pleasing exception to the general run of convicts. His wife had followed him from Europe, and, as is the rule, he had been allowed to live outside the prison with her on condition of his doing his allotted hard-labour duty. This consisted of dragging 120 tree-trunks to Alexandrovsk. He had proved himself thrifty, and by the aid of a loan from the Crown had purchased ponies, with which he managed to do his hard labour in a comparatively short time, thus leaving himself a large remainder wherein he could work for himself and family. With a foresight and energy that would have won him a position anywhere, he had recognized a need in his village, and provided for it. From the interior, by this one road, passed all the traffic to the "capital," and those who had oxen and ponies for sale, and were taking them to the *bazar* or market-place in Alexandrovsk, made this the end of one of their stages; and very naturally so, since they had generally to wait for the tide. The little court-yard, which generally forms part of all Siberian cottages or huts, in his case was extended to make room for the cattle; and the shelters enclosing it provided the drovers with beds of hay. The cottage boasted two rooms, occupied by our host, his wife, and three children. The eldest, a daughter of about twenty, had joined them quite recently from the Caucasus, and to her was evidently due a daintiness, rare in Sakhalin huts, about the little room into which we now entered from the kitchen. There was a bedstead

THE STOCKADE OF THE ALEXANDROVSK PRISON.

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here also, always a sign of affluence on the island, which was offered to us; but we politely refused, electing to sleep on the floor. Upon this the daughter went into the cow-byre and fetched hay to spread on the floor, and then standing by, watched, with a sense of amazement stealing over her face, my interpreter spreading our rugs and skins on the hay. When this was done, she turned to my companion, and asked him—

"Is the English *barin* a very celebrated person?"

"Why?"

"Oh," she said, "I have seen great generals in the Caucasus, and they slept on the hay; I have never seen any one sleep on so many rugs before!"

I was scarcely prepared for such primitive conceptions among Russians, and I can assure the reader that, had he met us after dark on an English highway, he would have taken us for foot-pads rather than princes.

The next morning a *troika* galloped up from the post to take us on to Alexandrovsk. Our way was through a winding valley, hemmed in by pine-clad slopes; in summer it was knee-deep in flowers, and the hedges gay with clusters of berries, but now all was bleak and cold. We had not gone far before a stinging sleet, changing to snow, drove down from the Okhotsk Sea. We wrapped ourselves from head to foot, for the blast was armed with needles, which seemed to pierce our skin. King Frost had begun his seven months' reign. Leafless and bare stood the great firs and poplars, hard and stern in the wintry blast, relieved only by the passionate blood-red tints of a tiny mountain-ash, whose clusters of red berries and crimson-purple leaves defied the winter's numbing cold. A few miles more and we were on the seashore, exposed to the full force of the tempest from the north. Here, turning our backs to it, we seemed to fly on the wings of the storm. How jolly it was! The lull and the

breathing-time after the struggle, and then the yielding of one's self up to the strong element to be swept on with a great rush. What could have been more enjoyable than the gallop over the hard sand and through the sea to the merry jingling of bells ?

CHAPTER XVII

SCENES AND PERSONS IN ALEXANDROVSK

Plans for departure—A broken cable—Rumours of war with Japan—A reply telegram in nineteen days—Chief buildings of Alexandrovsk—Classification of prisoners—Flogging—The *plet*—Putrid prison rations—The painful story of Mrs. A.—Twenty years in the dungeons—"Who are you?"—Arrival of prisoners—A tale of murders.

ON arrival at Alexandrovsk I and my interpreter, whose services I elected to retain until my departure from the island, found a temporary lodging at the ex-overseer's, as his expected guests had not yet arrived. The family was plunged into grief for the brother of the wife, and son of the old ex-convict father, who had been murdered, but whose body had not yet been found.

Again I had to adopt a Micawber-like attitude with regard to my departure from the island. My plans for getting back to England had been to return to Nikolaevsk, and thence by steamboat up the Amur and Shilka to the terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railway at Stretensk; or failing that, I had a distant hope that the promised near completion of the Manchurian Railway might allow of my reaching the Trans-Siberian Railway by that means from Vladivostok. Two things prevented my adopting the former plan, which had to be followed up at once if at all, and even then might result in my spending two months on the Amur waiting for the sledging season to commence.

Half my baggage, including my travelling furs, had gone astray, and my money had given out owing to an extended stay.

The vessel which brought the baggage from Nikolaevsk had failed in an attempt to land anything or anybody at Alexandrovsk, and so had continued its journey to Vladivostok, 800 miles beyond. Fortunately another vessel returning was able to put in, and arrived some weeks after, just before I was at last able to get away.

As to money, my bankers at Vladivostok had an agent, but not a branch, on Sakhalin, in the person of the ex-convict merchant, Mr. Y. My letter of credit was therefore useless until I could get them to instruct their agent. A telegram was therefore despatched asking them to order a payment of 500 rubles. This perhaps was one of the incidents which made those around me uneasy as to the safety of my person, for telegrams are not secrets of the service, on Sakhalin, but soon become public property. Mr. X. was walking in Alexandrovsk one day when he was stopped by two or three people with the remark—

"Have you heard the news?"

"No. What is it?"

"Why, a telegram for 100 rubles has come for you."

The story of my telegram, and the reply, illustrates not only the difficulties, but the unimportance of mere posts and telegrams in Siberia. This is the more remarkable when we remember the efforts of the Government, made from the earliest years of Siberian conquest to establish posting and postal communication at cheap rates. Political and military considerations had doubtless paved the way, and the possibilities of quick transmission were marvellous. It is said, that in the eighteenth century messengers on horseback circulated between the Courts of the White Tsar and the Son of Heaven, a distance of over five thousand miles, in twenty-eight days. A story is told of one who accomplished the distance in the marvellously short time of

twenty-one days. It was the occasion of a very urgent communication from Peking. The messenger, riding day and night, speeding on without a moment's delay for sleep, dozing at whiles when smooth stretches of the way allowed it, arrived at St. Petersburg at the end of three weeks, absolutely exhausted. Tumbling off his horse, he was hurried, travel-stained as he was, into the presence of his august master. His despatches safely and personally delivered he was ushered into an ante-room, where he fell into a deep sleep. Meanwhile the perusal of the despatches had raised some question in the Tsar's mind, and he sent for the messenger to interrogate him; but the attendants, finding the man so dead asleep that all their efforts to rouse him were unsuccessful, had at last to explain the situation to his Majesty. He, without a moment's hesitation, said, "I will awaken him." Entering the ante-chamber, he planted himself in front of the sleeper, and in a loud voice called out, "*Loshadi gotovi!*" (The horses are ready!) Immediately the man leaped to his feet, to the astonishment of the court attendants.

To render my position more awkward, the cable from the mainland (De Castries Bay) to the island (Alexandrovsk), which was the only link with the outer world during the greater part of the winter, had been broken in the previous June. Some said it was the work of a Japanese vessel, but this was probably mere rumour; for I was shown pieces of it, by the engineer responsible for its repair, and he stated that it was wearing out in several places. This constant fear of Japan was reflected in the military preparations — including the importation of artillery — that had been recently made, and have continued to be made since my departure. Twice during my stay telegrams were received stating that war had been declared between Russia and Japan.

In its present undeveloped condition the island presents no great commercial attraction. Japan draws supplies

of salted fish from Sakhalin as well as from the Amur, and only in case of hostilities with Russia would these be endangered. Coal is certainly mined, though not in large quantities, and the supply is generally thought to be limited. The fur trade is no longer of serious account, and there remain only the petroleum springs, whose true value has not yet transpired. Having regard to its present population of criminals and ex-convicts, the island cannot be said to exercise any great allurement. From a military point of view it commands the entrance to the Amur, and could be easily taken; but as there is no port on Sakhalin to give shelter to vessels, possession of the island would be of little use excepting for massing troops, say, at Pogobi, for transport in boats in calm weather across the five miles of straits to the mainland. The Amur *liman*, or estuary, as we have seen, is very difficult of navigation, and the shallow depth and narrow channels would be even more efficient protection than the present batteries and mines. In winter the frost offers a sufficient hindrance to military operations.

The rumour connecting Japan with the rupture of the cable had no other foundation than the imagination of the look-out man at the light on Jonquière Point, who reported that he had seen a Japanese vessel passing north up the Straits of Tartary just before the disconnexion.

Under the circumstances, this cable was of considerable importance to the island administration. With no regular communication owing to the want of a haven, and the absolute absence of it during winter, save for two months when dog-sledges had to be relied upon, it was a serious matter in case of external complications as well as internal and administrative crises. All telegrams from St. Petersburg, messages from the Governor-general at Khabarovsk, and official or commercial instructions from Vladivostok, had to suffer the delay of waiting for vessels to call at De Castries for them, and Neptune's pleasure to allow the

said vessels to approach near enough to land them at Alexandrovsk.

There is an official leaflet called *Sakhalin Telegrams*, published at Alexandrovsk for the benefit of the officials. It contains news and telegrams from St. Petersburg, and, taking up a copy one day, I noticed that a news telegram had taken eight days from St. Petersburg to De Castries (over 6000 miles), and thirteen days from De Castries to Alexandrovsk (sixty knots). Notwithstanding the importance of the re-establishment of telegraphic communication with the mainland, especially in view of the approaching winter, the officials failed to unite the cable, rejecting the offer of a properly equipped vessel from Shanghai, and "muddling about" and not "through" with an ancient gunboat, one of those handed over by America at the time of the purchase of Alaska. Month after month passed by; winter came, and nothing was effected. Then came a hiatus of communication; Sakhalin was completely cut off from the rest of the world until the freezing-up of the strait allowed the despatch of dog-sledges, which it was now determined to send every five days instead of monthly or fortnightly as heretofore. Six months later, in the summer of last year, the old cable was abandoned and a new one laid over the funnel of the straits from Cape Pogobi to Cape Muraviev, and a land-wire connecting this with Alexandrovsk and Nikolaevsk.

Telegraph rates are very low in the Russian Empire; and, as in India, there are three rates according to speed, so in Siberia there are two. It was little likely, under the conditions then existing, that I could command express transmission; but I paid the urgent rate—triple the ordinary—and prepaid a reply. The day after my message was handed in at the office, a vessel was sent over with it to De Castries, thence, in due course, it was wired to Vladivostok. From that time I counted the days' and watched and waited with expectation for vessels coming

from the mainland. At first, I hoped for a reply in three or four days; but no steamer came. A calm day ensued, and a little tug ventured across, and, returning with no news, I naturally comforted myself with the reflexion that there had not been time for an answer. Then the mail steamer returning to Vladivostok arrived, and successfully delivered its despatches and cargo, and I hastened to the post-office, but there was nothing for me. A storm then broke upon us from the west, and the steamers, including the gunboat, fled over to De Castries. Ten days had already elapsed, and no reply had come. My cash had disappeared, and my hopes of returning before winter set in and blocked my exit, were getting lower. From day to day I nursed expectations of the repair of the cable, and the receipt of an immediate reply by that means; but this was not to be. On the sixteenth day a mail steamer on its outward journey stood off the coast, and, besieging the post-office later in the morning, I was again disappointed. The Chief informed us, with no trace of regret in his voice, that Sakhalin was now absolutely "cut off from the civilized world, and afforded an excellent opportunity to explorers." In explanation, he said that a written notice had come from De Castries to the effect that the telegraph-station there had been closed owing to the breaking of the wire on the mainland, which could not be repaired until the following May or June (it was accomplished, owing to the continued open weather, in a few days). It appears that a storm or flood—a not uncommon occurrence—had brought down the wire, and an engineer, with an escort of soldiers, having set out to locate the damage and repair it, had been overtaken by a snowstorm, and, unprepared for this sudden attack of winter, had been obliged to retrace his steps. It was bad news for us; but not unforgetful of the courtesies due, we congratulated the telegraph Chief on being able to close his office and enjoy a holiday.

Some days later, when the line on the mainland had been repaired, my hopes were raised again by receiving a notice to the effect that a telegram awaited us at the office. We set out for the bureau, a mile and a half distant; but, arriving there, the clerk declared, on looking into the matter, that he could find no telegram, and added with indifference that it was a mistake, the notice referred to a telegram that had been delivered six weeks earlier. Such little discrepancies in the telegraph administration were of no moment.

Two days after our return from the interior, we had found, lying on the counter of the office, a telegram which we had sent from Derbensk, only thirty-five miles distant, three days previously. It was awaiting the convenience of the messenger, when he should have leisure to deliver it. To our amusement, on another occasion, we noticed a telegram for the Chief of the telegraph-office himself lying on the counter, which had not been delivered to him, though he resided on the premises, and had, since its arrival, gone up to Derbensk.

At last, after nineteen days of waiting, a reply came to hand, and when I ultimately reached Vladivostok, I learned that nine days had been occupied in the transmission of the telegram and reply, and for ten days the original message had lain undelivered on the counter of the head post-office in Vladivostok—this the authorities admitted to my bankers!

Long ere this it was quite evident that I must place my hopes on the Manchurian Railway, and trust for permission to get through.

Meanwhile I had not given up the idea of visiting the Ainus, and gaining all the information and some photographs from officials who had been stationed among them, I began to make plans during my forced inactivity to visit them. By taking a vessel to Korsakovsk, I could from there reach the south-east coast, and even venture

as far as the Bay of Patience, with good fortune. Communications being open rather later between Korsakovsk and Vladivostok or Japan, my departure might be delayed sufficiently to allow of this. To do this I proposed to take my interpreter, who was of great assistance to me, The Governor was again interviewed for his permission, but this time he proved unwilling, and raised a technical excuse, which was ridiculed even by his subordinates. A festive gathering was to be held at the Governor's house the next day, and I therefore approached four of the most influential people, the *procureur*, the Chief of the district, the inspector of agriculture, and a doctor, who were all favourable to my plans. They all promised to bring their influence to bear on the Governor; but he was one of those weak men who have no definite conviction in important affairs, but who occasionally are most obdurate in a petty matter, lest they should be thought feeble. This way being barred, I proposed, to avoid his technical objection, to reach the Ainus by an overland journey *viâ* Derbensk, Rikovsk, and the river Poronai, but I had, unfortunately, chosen one of the worst times of the year. There were no available means of transport. The Poronai was freezing, but not frozen, and no reindeer could pass the swampy tracks until the coming January; but worse than this were the torrential streams on the south-east coast. I should have to wait days for them to subside, and many soldiers had lost their lives in attempting to cross them; this we were informed by Mr. von Friken, who was one of the few officials who had ever visited the northerly portion of the Bay of Patience. The plan had therefore reluctantly to be given up.

During the time of waiting and watching, of the making and discarding of plans, I had an opportunity no other English traveller had yet had, of observing from day to day the life of this unique penal settlement,

in which more than half the convicts sentenced to hard labour on the island are located.

In picturing Alexandrovsk, the reader must not think of it as a town with busy shops and factories. The chief feature, around which the whole place centres, is the prison. If there are three or four merchants' stores, and an iron foundry, these are for the prisoners; if there are well-to-do-looking wooden houses, the residences of the officials, they exist because of the prisoners, and last, if there is a museum containing a small ethnological and natural history collection, that is a sign of the presence of political exiles. The Siberian traveller cannot be long ignorant of the debt science owes to these banished ones. On the mainland at Minusinsk and at Chita every one knows how much has been due to Mr. Kuznetsov, and what worthy memorials he has raised in these two excellent collections. To one of this class, who, thanks to the Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences is now no longer exiled from Europe, is practically due the museum at Alexandrovsk; a story in connexion with its early founding reflects the crass ignorance displayed by some of the officials under whom these exiles are placed.

On a journey along the west coast this "political" had made an interesting discovery of stone implements of the palæolithic period, and on his return he exhibited them to the Governor of the island, and to the official who afterwards became the director of the museum.

"What did you say they were?" rejoined the officials.

"Stone implements used by one of the early races in the island, for hewing and cutting."

"Nonsense. Whoever heard of such a thing as stone knives? They are sports, mere freaks of nature."

I have no doubt they had a good laugh over the "madness" of the exile; but, needless to say, the

specimens are treasured to-day, as well-accredited obsidian and diorite "celts," adding one more valuable link to the history of the habitation of the island.

In addition to the buildings mentioned, there is the church in the main street, and overlooking the market-place, or *bazar*, where an ill-assorted collection of huts is huddled together, are the Muhammadan mosque and the little Lutheran church. Beyond the bridge the road to the jetty is bordered by long store-houses, guarded by patrols, and close to the *pristan*, facing the sea, are quarantine and bonded sheds, and the lazaret, where the maimed and the halt, who can still work, do a little to earn their rations. Outside of these, the chief buildings, is the great body of small cottages or huts where the ex-convicts, and in some cases married convicts, live.

In the early part of the morning, at midday, and again at evening, the town is astir with gangs of convicts going to and from their work. All are dressed in dirty cotton clothing and leather shoes, and those that give trouble are manacled. Some are engaged in pushing trolleys, laden with great sacks of American flour, from the jetty, others are going out to the coal-mines. At one of the latter, the tunnel of which you can see as your *troika* climbs the hill on the way to Due, there is a gang of some twenty, who are stationed there with one overseer only. They live and sleep there, or rather they are meant to sleep there ; for it is said that in the night some of them escape, and rob, and return with their booty. They make it all right with their guard, for he alone, is powerless to prevent it, even if he wanted to. Before the present Governor came, this sort of thing was commonly done from the prison itself—that is, the reformatory portion (*razryad ispravlyayushtchikhsya*). Good-conduct prisoners in this section are still allowed to go out with an overseer at their head to do sundry work, such as painting, etc., and some of these slip away

A GANG FROM THE "TESTING" PRISON ROAD-MAKING. [*To face page* 337.

if occasion serves, and return at evening to bribe the overseer; but in the old days the gates were open, and those who were left behind would fee the sentry, spend the day outside, returning before nightfall with what they had appropriated. Of course a search was then organized to discover the thief or thieves, and even the Governor's house was not free from the visits of the soldiers, while the real offenders were secure in their "*appartements garnis*" in the prison! The gangs from the "testing" prison *(razryad ispituemikh)* are always attended by armed soldiers, as seen in the illustration; where they are engaged in making a new road leading up to the prison, at a spot a few yards below the office of the "muddled" merchant with whom I spent my first night on the island.

There is another class of prisoners besides the soldier-gang and the overseer-gang, the so-called "free-commands," or ticket-of-leave men, many of whom—men and women—may be seen going to the prison to get their quota of work every morning. On my way to the post I often passed groups of these, the women in short skirts and great top felt boots, long frieze *khalati* (overcoats), with the diamond-shaped tell-tale patch of yellow cloth let in the back. These were convicts who had become the "wives" of "exile-settlers;" the others, retained by the officials nominally for cleaning the prison, were kept in the building, where they could be seen through the bars of the window to the right of the main entrance to the prison offices.

The law provides that any criminal with a sentence of not less than two years and eight months; any woman, not exceeding forty years of age, with a sentence of two years or over; and any political exile, at the discretion of the Government, may be deported to Sakhalin. The *ukaz* of 1900, in reference to exiles, has generally been thought to have put an immediate stop to their deportation;

but exiles with a sentence of hard labour are not contemplated in the proclamation, therefore it is that criminal and political exiles continue to arrive on Sakhalin. The *ukaz* may be considered rather to register the desire of the penal authorities; to indicate the line they wish to take, while reserving to themselves the right of dealing with special cases in their own way, and realizing their scheme in their own time.

Criminals on their arrival are classified according to their sentence. Those with a sentence of twelve years and upwards are put into the worst gaol, the "testing" prison. These are mostly murderers, and, if they have proved themselves recalcitrant, their chains are not struck off after the journey, but they are confined to that portion of it called the *kandalnaya turma* (chained prison).

The "reformatory" prison contains those with a term of four to twelve years, while those with less than four years are treated, after a short sojourn, as "free-commands." This latter division includes *brodyagi* from Russia, who are sentenced to one and a half years, and the same class from Siberia, who get four years' hard labour.

Promotion is from the "testing" to the "reformatory" gaol, and from there to the "free-command" division, the length of time spent in each depending upon the behaviour of the prisoner. Under the most favourable conditions a man may pass only four years in the "testing" prison, whereas another may be confined for eight, or even more. As a whole, one may say, that a third of the term is spent in each section.

Strictly speaking, "free-command," according to Russian terminology, includes all in the "reformatory" gaol, as well as those outside, but I have adopted this distinction as clearer.

The arrival of the free-born wife of a convict will gain even a murderer release from prison, and he may

THE "REFORMATORY" PRISON, ALEXANDROVSK. THE "TESTING" PRISON IS IN THE BACKGROUND.

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CONVICTS UNDER GUARD HAULING LOGS.

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forthwith live as a "free-command;" but, of course, having his full term of hard labour to fulfil. On the part of the female criminal a similar alleviation comes from marriage—or, rather, her choice by an exile. This will free her from the prison walls, and she may live, as we have seen, with her "man" on condition that her hard labour duty is done.

On the other hand, many incur additional sentences by escape, theft, and deeds of violence. A prisoner who escapes and is recaptured, not only receives a flogging with the *plet*, but may get an addition of anything from a quarter to the whole of his original sentence. In the year 1900 the prisoners on Sakhalin sentenced to hard labour for life numbered 510, of whom 70 were women; but there were those who, Irish as it may seem, had more than a life sentence. These were already well advanced in life, and had yet to undergo a term of between 40 and 50 years. There were 13 such, while 51, of whom one was a woman, had sentences between 30 and 40 years, and 240 had between 20 and 30 years to their credit.

The expiration of a sentence does not bring with it the long-hoped-for farewell to Sakhalin, for the ex-convict regains his rights only by degrees. For six years more he must remain on the island as an "exile-settler;" and then, if he is in a position—which so few are—to get away, he may go as a "peasant" to the mainland of Siberia for another six years. Then only is he at liberty to return to Russia.

The "testing" prison at Alexandrovsk held during my stay about 600, many of them in chains, and most in idleness. Only 100 of these, I was informed, were sent out to do work such as mining, road-making, or log-hauling, while the remainder dragged on a miserable otiose existence. The authorities excused this unsatisfactory state of things, declaring that these prisoners were

such bad characters that they dare not let them out to work. It was this wearisome and demoralizing existence which caused them to take matters into their own hands and escape.

Two of the most notable characters were chained to wheelbarrows night and day. This degrading form of punishment, which has been done away with for some years on the mainland, only survived on Sakhalin. During the years 1894–96 there were five men so chained. They were Kosulsky, Paschenko, Schirokolobov, Ogurzov, and a Caucasian.

"The *rozgi* (birch-rods dipped in salt) had not been given there for three years, far less the *plet*," says Mr. J. Y. Simpson in describing the famous model prison, the Alexandrovsky Central, near Irkutsk. On Sakhalin both were in use. Even women, who by law are immune from corporal punishment, were flogged with the former in February of 1902; and two defenceless female prisoners were put in chains because they would not do the will of their villainous overseers. Flogging with birch-rods is not necessarily a cruel or unfitting punishment for hardened criminals. The regrettable thing was that a quiet and respectful prisoner might be arbitrarily ordered stripes by Patrin, the Chief of the prison, or by officials of his stamp, when in a mood or passion.

The *plet* is a modified form of the *knut*. The latter, which has long been laid aside, is described as similar to a *plet*, but with an iron hook at the end of the thongs. The *plet* is a whip with a stout thick handle about eighteen inches in length, and a six-foot thong branching into three. These three thongs used to end in little bags filled with lead. Only recently (since I was on the island) one of these, such as I have described, was sent from Sakhalin to St. Petersburg as a curiosity; and, I believe, these leaded ends are replaced to-day with knots. However, my interpreter, who reached the island in 1897, said

CHAINED TO WHEELBARROWS NIGHT AND DAY. [*To face page* 340.

THE "KABILA" (FLOGGING BENCH), "ROZGI" (BIRCH RODS), AND THE "PLET" AT RIKOVSK.

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that when he was in the "reformatory" gaol all the prisoners paid tribute—soup, food, etc.—once a month to the *palach*, or executioner, on condition that if they were ordered the *plet* he would bring the leaded ends down on the *kabila* (board) on which they were stretched, instead of on their bare bodies. In doing this the *palach* leaves himself open to punishment, but only in one case did I hear of the penalty being imposed for the omission, and then he suffered terribly for it. It was the ex-executioner Komeleva, and he was thrashed by his enemy, Terslili. So awful was the flogging, that though it occurred in 1882, a photograph of the wound was taken in 1899 showing it still suppurating seventeen years after.

So terrible a weapon was the leaden-ended *plet* that three strokes were sufficient to cause death if the executioner so pleased. The story is told of a Sakhalin prisoner who, sentenced to one hundred strokes—ninety-nine are given—promised the *palach* a bottle of vodka if he would not hit him with the leaded ends. Even the thongs skin and slice the flesh in a horrible manner, but the victim was a hardened veteran, and when he had received ninety-five, thinking he had escaped, he called out, "It's no matter, you can't hurt me now, you needn't think you'll get your vodka." But he had not reckoned with his man, for after three more strokes he was dead. It was only necessary to draw back the *plet*, as the stroke was spent, for the ends to injure the liver and send a clot of blood to the heart.

Compared with the criminal population the number of political exiles on Sakhalin is insignificant. According to the census of January 1, 1898, out of a total of seven thousand and eighty engaged in hard labour they numbered seventy-six. Their fate is bad enough, though not so terrible as that of their friends in such a place as Sredni Kolimsk, within the Arctic Circle. The greatest hardship

that awaits them on Sakhalin is the exile from their homeland, and the banishment from anything like educated society. In the cities of Tobolsk, Tomsk, and Irkutsk not only are the exiles in touch with the civilized world, but they are surrounded by educated people. On Sakhalin it is different, the few who would make together a little society, are scattered, and the so-called *élite*, the officials, prefer drinking and gambling to science and literature. The old adage, that "it's an ill wind that blows nobody any good," is, however, true in their case. The dearth of educated people on the island accentuates the demand for their services in school-mastering, doctoring, meteorological, and book-keeping work, and thus they are provided with congenial occupation. Such men were usually quiet in gaol, and obtained the speediest promotion accorded to the well-behaved. In the positions assigned them they had the right to claim rations as prisoners, but none would risk the unpleasant experience of having to apply for them, nor indeed could they be expected to eat the salted fish which was doled out to the criminals. It therefore depended very much upon the official who had appointed them, and the salary he chose to give, whether they could scrape along or not.

Just before I left the island the Governor insisted on my interpreter leaving me and going back to Due to be schoolmaster there at a salary of five rubles (10*s.* 6*d.*) per month. Of course this was an impossible sum on which to keep body and soul together. He is now no longer, I am glad to say, on Sakhalin.

For his private convenience in the distribution of the prisoners' rations, the chief of the Alexandrovsk prison, Patrin, doled them out in quantities sufficient for ten men, leaving to them the division and distribution. This will explain what follows. Returning one afternoon to the house of the ex-overseer of the prison, where we were still lodging, we found our landlady in trouble. One of the

GOLINSKY, THE PRESENT "PALACH," OR EXECUTIONER, WITH THE "PLET,"
ALEXANDROVSK.

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convict-servants, a man from the "reformatory" gaol who had been some time with them, was missing, and it was reported that he had been arrested. He was a decent, honest man-of-all-work, who did all the domestic work, the washing-up and the waiting upon us. We immediately went to inquire, and finding this was so, communicated with our landlord, who was on the *pristan*. Some hours afterwards he arrived, bringing the man with him; and we heard the explanation of his sudden disappearance. He had gone for his usual allowance of food, and Patrin, seeing him, had sent him away, telling him curtly that he must join a "ten." He went off to find nine others, but returned unsuccessful, and the chief in a sharp voice called out, "You must go away and find them, there are numbers 98 and 99 not belonging to a ten." He then went in search of these men, and having discovered them, learnt that they did already belong to a "ten." This time Patrin was so irate that he ordered the soldiers to clap him into a cell. Such was the treatment accorded to a well-behaved convict who was simply applying for the food to which he was entitled by law. The ten arrangement was *ultra vires*, and had nothing to do with the Government regulation.

I will not burden the reader with the details of the prisoners' rations, with the number of *zolotniki*,* and fractions of a *zolotnik* of *grecha*, potatoes, etc., allowed him. Suffice it to say that the long list which I have before me provides amply for the wants of the convict, the *menu* including black bread, *grecha* (buckwheat), salted meat, and fish, brick-tea and soup. Unfortunately, what has been said as to quantity does not apply to quality or variety. Salted fish and salted meat prevail, and vegetables are scarce. Moreover, the list is a council of perfection. Salted meat is ordered three times a week—on one of which it may be fresh—and salt fish for the remainder.

* A *zolotnik* = ·15 oz. avoirdupois. 106·34 *zol.* = 1 lb.

The frequent fasts in Russia often deprive the convict of his claim even to salt meat, and the price of fresh meat puts it almost out of question, except when a cow dies, or, falling ill, has to be killed. Such an event is a boon and a blessing, for it also saves something from the prison allowance to the official pocket!

Again, the great distance of Sakhalin and the broken communication in winter place it at a great disadvantage. Ample stores have to be laid in as a provision against possible starvation; and as a result the salted fish is often a year old, evil-smelling and putrid by the time of its distribution. But worse than this, it sometimes arrives in that state, for ships' officers only corroborated what Dr. Lansdell had heard twenty years before, that in taking provisions across to the island, the smell of the fish on board was insupportable.

It was unlikely therefore that the political exiles would willingly apply for rations of this description, or run the risk of treatment such as I have described; and the Chief was quite satisfied with an abstention which was profitable to his pocket.

One of these exiles, whom I met on the island, was a cultured lady who had gone through a most terrible experience. Her name is well known throughout Siberia, and in Russia too; but I will call her Mrs. A. She had belonged to a secret society unknown to her husband, and on the violent death of Alexander II., in 1881, it was necessary for her to flee the country. Years passed, and, altering her appearance, she returned to Russia, trusting that matters had quieted down. The police, however, arrested her on suspicion, and casting about for some means of proving her identity, they hit upon a brilliant and most cruel test. They summoned her husband, who was unaware of her return, and suddenly caused him to be confronted by her. The ruse was as successful as cruel, and the recognition instantaneous and spontaneous. From

POLITICAL EXILES, RIKOVSK. [*To face page* 344.

that time the wife disappeared from the knowledge of the world. Immured in the dungeons of the Schlüsselberg years went by, and absolute silence brooded over her fate. This famous fortress, situated on a small island in Lake Ladoga, near the issue of the river Neva, is the State prison for dangerous political offenders. In those days a prisoner within these frowning walls was seldom heard of again, and Mr. A., at length believing her to be dead, married again. Ten years and more had gone by when he was suddenly startled by the news that his first wife was still alive, and had been transported to Sakhalin. Matters were explained to his second wife, they agreed to part, and he immediately set out for Sakhalin, *viâ* England and America, arriving on the island a few months before myself, where I met them both. I spent several evenings with them, and it was a marvel to me how any one pent up in those terrible dungeons for ten years could have preserved their reason ; but a preternatural quietness was all that was singular about her. A brighter time has now dawned upon her and her husband, for last year (1902) he was allowed to take his wife as far as Vladivostok, where they have now settled down.

On board the *Yaroslav*, among her load of convicts, last year arrived a political exile of note, Mr. Trigoni. He had been incarcerated in the Schlüsselberg before Mrs. A., and she had left him still a prisoner within its walls. In fact he had been arrested in 1882, the year of the great trial of the members of the People's Will Party, and imprisoned in the Alexeievsky Ravelin of the Petropavlovsk (opposite the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg), from which he was transferred with twenty-one others to the Schlüsselberg in 1884, when the latter was converted into a State prison. Of these twenty-two, P. S. Povlianov, in an open letter to the Minister of Justice (*Times*, August 8, 1903), said, "Seventeen have perished (in the prison), and only two, after serving a twenty years' term, have lived to see exile.

The remaining three are under life-long sentences, and so continue their confinement in this tomb, without any hope of ever breathing a freer air." The two, who after twenty years lived to see exile, were Povlianov himself and Trigoni. The latter now alone survives, for Povlianov, after cleverly escaping, in 1902, from the Yakutsk *oblast*, to Paris, recently committed suicide. Trigoni, after his terrible spell in the dungeons, is now a "peasant" on Sakhalin. He admitted to a friend of mine on the island that the first ten or twelve years of silence and loneliness were terrible, but after that, the severest restrictions were relaxed, and though he was never allowed to see a relative, he was able to get books and to write a letter once or twice a year. He is now about fifty years old, but is grey, and looks nearer seventy. As a "peasant" he must support himself, but he cannot legally be compelled to settle where the Chief of the exile department may choose.

It is proposed that he should take charge of the little library that was being started in connexion with Sister Mayer's work, to which I shall refer later.

One whom I got to know well on Sakhalin, had been incarcerated in the Petropavlovsk, opposite the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, and he thus described his experiences to me.

"I was driven," said he, "in a closed carriage, with curtains drawn, to the frowning fortress, and then through the gloomy portals past the barracks. There I was blindfolded and led through a maze of passages, past the patrols into the corridor, and from this into the gloomy, damp cell, or rather vault, for this more aptly describes the dungeon-like, semicircular roofed chamber." (He then drew me plans and described the interior much as Prince Kropotkin and others have painted it.) "Nervous and frightened I gazed around like a hunted hare. The door had hardly shut upon the soldier when I heard a gentle

tapping. What could it be? I was well-nigh out of my senses, and could hardly take in my situation. So great was my prostration that I could not by effort remember the alphabet. There was yet another thing that got upon my nerves. In the door was an oval piece of glass with an outside leather flap. Through this the warder could silently and without warning observe any motion of mine. Keeping my eye fearfully upon this oval disc, and noticing that it had a mercurial, mirror-like look, I concluded that there was no one watching me, and stepped upon a stool in the corner whence I thought I heard sounds. Just within my reach was a grating over the hole communicating with the stove outside."

It appears that the authorities, who do everything they possibly can to ensure secrecy, a death-like silence and absolute isolation, had made a tactical mistake in economizing. One stove heated two cells, and the pipes communicating with them joined and became one before reaching the stove. It was therefore possible for sounds to pass through from one room to the adjoining.

"Listening, and keeping my eye upon the oval glass, I caught some indistinct sounds. At first I could not understand, but by degrees I made out the question, 'Who are you?' I replied, 'I am A—— L——.'

"Back came the reply, 'Speak louder; I cannot hear you.'

"I answered, 'I will, but I am afraid of the soldier hearing me. I am A—— L——. Who are you?'

"'I am Taisia Yakimova;' and so the conversation continued."

It transpired that his neighbour was but a girl of nineteen. She was accused of having been found with explosives in her possession at the coronation of the present Tsar, and was condemned, in 1895, to five years' detention in the Petropavlovsk. This, of course, was not all communicated at one time. After the first few

sentences the terrible eye was upon the new prisoner. The latter quickly dropped down. The door opened; the soldier entered and said, "Your honour will understand it is forbidden to talk." After that, many knocks were heard; many conversations were held. Soon after a baby was born in the next cell. Her *fiancé* had been arrested also for implication in the same plot, but had pleaded for pardon, promised loyalty, and been set free. She had disdained to do this, and had tried to forget him. At the end of five years, spent in the dungeon, she was transported for life to the far-distant *oblast* of Yakutsk, and as I write is dragging out a miserable existence in the Arctic settlement of Sredni Kolimsk. The new prisoner was kept in the dungeon-cell for one year and a half, and then despatched on the *Yaroslav* to Sakhalin.

Twice a year this vessel reaches Sakhalin—in May and October—bringing on each occasion about 800 male convicts. An accident had delayed them that autumn, and I found the steamer at Vladivostok departing for the island not long before the cessation of navigation in the Straits of Tartary. Owing to the new arrangements, consequent on the *ukaz* of the Tsar coming into force on January 1 (O.S.) following, increased numbers of prisoners had been arriving from the Siberian mainland. Over 1000 disembarked at the *pristan* during my stay on the island, and how they were to be accommodated, with the 800 to follow in the *Yaroslav*, was a puzzle. At the last moment a small wing was being added to the main prison, which could hardly be ready, and certainly not dry, by the arrival of the last batch. Overcrowding there must have been somewhere.

Going down to the jetty one day I found a crowd of prisoners just landed from the mail steamer. It was a cold day, with a north wind blowing, and the convicts were being searched, since some article had been missed by the captain on board. It was a strange picture, the

THE ARRIVAL OF CONVICTS FROM RUSSIA.

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rows of unkempt, grey-clad figures, with their fetters tied up to their girdles, and bundles at their feet. Kazaks stood on guard, looking quite as travel-stained in their shapeless astrakhan caps, the woolly curls of which, bedraggled, hung down, and, mingling with their hair, gave them a wild-beast appearance.

Some of the soldiers were good-naturedly chatting with the prisoners, and I more than suspected that, if there was anything in the bundles which should not be there, it was temporarily transferred to the soldiers' pockets. Outside the gate of the *pristan*, through which a patrol allowed me to pass, were grouped a number of poor exiles waiting a chance of smuggling vodka under the gate.

On October 19 another batch of about 150 convicts arrived from the mainland ; and on the night of October 20–21, about 700 more. I have spoken of the laxity of the officials, and dwelt upon the unimportance of the post and telegraph services ; but did any other country ever have such things happen as the following?

On the arrival of the October 19th batch of convicts, it was found that the ship's manifest, the captain's report, and the check-over, or roll-call on the *pristan*, all differed as to the number of prisoners. The totals were respectively 147, 149, and 137. Here was an excellent opportunity of escape, a half a dozen more or less did not matter. If numbers were of no importance, neither was time. This particular vessel seemed bewitched. For a mail steamer her behaviour was certainly extraordinary. The captain discovered after he had left Alexandrovsk for Korsakovsk that by mistake two sailors had been left behind on shore at De Castries. He therefore put back for the mainland, and the next day we learnt that he would have to return again to Alexandrovsk, since the assistant engineer and two men had been left on shore there.

The irregularities thus discovered in checking over the prisoners might have favoured their escape had they known

it, but it was quite otherwise with the books of the prison bureau. The Chief of the Chancellerie (of the Governor), for a reason which I shrewdly suspect, in the spring of last year boldly declared, that the books and official papers were kept so badly in the office, that a number of prisoners were retained in chains, and on the island, much longer than the terms they were sentenced for, even to five and six years!

The system of allowing convicts, "free commands," to live outside the prison, though still under certain restraint, has its difficulties; and the necessity for economy insisted upon in St. Petersburg, resulting in an insufficiency of warders, adds considerably to these, and yet, if officials would only spend less time in drinking and gambling, much might be done towards rendering life and property secure on the island.

During my stay on Sakhalin, three people whom I met, and the father of a fourth, were murdered. The first was the youth whose death I have already recorded, the next occurred on October 1 (O.S.). I had moved to a little house near the *pristan*, where a petty customs officer lived, and October 1 being a feast day or holiday, I was returning from the church when I met my new landlady walking down the road in company with a friend of her husband's for protection. The man passed on to the town, and I took his place, as she wished to return to the jetty. As we went along, two poor creatures from the lazaret, which was opposite to my new lodging, came down the road. One of them was rolling about as if he found the road too narrow, and my landlady pointing to him, the pregnant remark, "*Eto prazdnik*" ("It is a holiday").

Much has been said and written on the question whether the Russian nation is to be credited with more or less drunkenness than Western nations. Whether or not the defenders of Russia are correct in maintaining that the peasant is not frequently a victim of alcohol, and has not

the wherewithal to pay for it on ordinary working days, there is no doubt that he excels himself and publishes his failing abroad on holidays.

The man reeled towards us, and in his drunken, good-natured way, calling out, "*Zdravstvuete! Kak vi pazhivaete?*" ("Good morning. How do you do?"). At half-past six that evening he lay a corpse in the market-place. His companion had murdered him for the sake of the seven or eight rubles upon him. This was in daylight, in a busy spot where the soldiers and police ought to have been—possibly even were; but the very atmosphere of the place seems criminal, and the officials, looking upon the convicts as brutes, are tempted to let them fight out their own quarrels, and if they happen to end fatally it is only one "rascal" the less.

The third murder occurred three days later. A man had called at my lodging and spent a little time in the kitchen, and was accompanied home by our two convict servants. His home lay just off the market-place, and shortly after they left him, he sat down near the lamp, when suddenly the outer shutters were forced open and he was shot through the window. This appeared to be the latest fashion in murdering, for it was the third by this method within a few weeks. Another occurred in a house just opposite ours near the customs sheds. The fourth case was that of the father of a scholar of my companion's at Due, to whom I had given some pence. It was two days later that we saw soldiers bringing along his parent's corpse, which had been washed up on the beach close to us. The man had been returning from Nikolaevsk with fifty or sixty rubles in his pocket, the proceeds of his little commercial transactions, when his comrades, in the middle of the strait, set upon him, killed him, and threw his body overboard. The Straits of Tartary could tell many a story of this kind.

One afternoon I set off with my interpreter for a short

walk, and we wandered up to the cemetery on a hill to the north of the town, a spot just visible in the illustration opposite page 108. It was a windy, bleak hillside, and below lay the sands and the pirate vessel with its memories of the recent murder. A sombre scene stretched before us—a patch on the hill burnt out of the wind-swept forest, wild and untended, and dotted with a scant remnant of gaunt, straggling trees. Wooden crosses, black, brown, and green, clustering thickly, told the same sad tale.

Here lies ——
Murdered —— 18—.

What mattered it by whom? For those that had not been murdered by convicts had, in the "good old times," met their death "accidentally" at the hands of the soldiers or officials. Cross after cross repeated the tale of murder, but here was a whole family group who had fallen to the assassin's weapon at the same time. They were three brothers, a wife, and a daughter, and had lived at the log-house yonder, which is now going to ruin; it was the cemetery guard-house in their time, three years ago. And surely if any one was free from attack one would think that it was these keepers of the dead. But even the ghosts of the departed were no protection to them; for one day they were missed by the baker who, setting out on the morrow to call, found all five murdered.

Down in the market-place, or *bazar*, that scene of terrible deeds, there are frequent quarrels, in which knives, daggers, or revolvers are drawn, and the police and soldiers are either absent or quite indifferent. I give here a typical one that occurred during Easter of last year (1902). It was told me by an eye-witness. The only warning the passer-by had of anything wrong was the sudden gathering of a crowd of Caucasian exiles. At length, between the legs of the crowd, two of them could be seen on the ground struggling, the one uppermost

digging his knife into the other. It was a case of jealousy which had lasted for two years, and the victim of the attempt had long ago asked for the protection of the police; but he was met with the ironical reply that the law could do nothing for him until after something had happened. Close by stood one of the police, a witness of the scuffle, who, instead of interfering, drew his revolver and fired into the air; and when asked why, replied, "I did it to call my companions together." Two or three hundred yards away the Chief and an overseer of the police were walking together, but took no notice of the disturbance. My informant hurried off to acquaint an official, who in his turn informed the Military Governor. He promptly ordered the Chief of the district to go and see what was the matter. The latter assured him that he had no doubt that it was only a quarrel, a matter of daily occurrence; but nevertheless went, saw the murder going on, came back and said, "Oh, your Excellency, it is just as I thought, merely a quarrel." The victim was taken to the hospital, where he died of his wounds two days afterwards; and his assailant was set upon by the mob and received five wounds in the head and twenty others, dying in the hospital on the same day as the other.

No further comment is needed on the laxity and indifference of officials. It was said when I was on Sakhalin that the authorities at Alexandrovsk expressed surprise if ten days elapsed without an escape from prison. In fact they looked upon the island as a prison in itself, and so it was; but fellow-prisoners on that same island were made to suffer through this slackness.

Speaking one day to the Chief of the prison at Due on this subject, I asked him, "Will the patrols at the Alexandrovsk prison be condemned to a penal regiment on account of the recent escapes of prisoners?"

"Yes," he said, "if they are proved to have been culpable."

"But," I replied, "you yourself have admitted that there are not enough sentries and warders on the island, and how in that case can they be held responsible?"

The only answer was a shrug of his shoulders.

Under his *régime* the Due prison was beginning to outlive its terrible reputation. He showed consideration to his prisoners, and among other things, allowed those in the mines to earn a little pocket-money by working on holidays.

In the olden days there were many escapes from Due; prisoners clubbed together and fled northward to Pogobi, and others smuggled themselves on board coaling-vessels. The chief mate of an ocean-going steamer flying the Japanese flag told me how, when engaged in the coasting trade north of Japan, his vessel had once coaled at Due, and an exile had begged the captain to secrete him and carry him away, offering at the same time a considerable reward. The captain agreed, and the exile was put into a cask. In order to avoid suspicion, for the Russian officials were used to all manner of deceit, the cask was a quarter filled with water, and when the daily search was made, the cook would busy himself in drawing water from this cask.

To-day Due contrasts well with Alexandrovsk, whence, owing to the presence of Patrin and the dreadful *ennui* in the *kandalnaya turma* (chained prison), escapes are many and frequent.

CHAPTER XVIII

STORIES OF PRISONERS

A show of arms necessary—A murderer with nineteen victims—I am warned—Black crosses by the wayside—"What do you think of Patrin?"—A fearful struggle—A saintly old prisoner—Eight years' hard labour for stealing a loaf—The "game" of the superintendent and the "exile-settlers."

IF a purse is almost indispensable in Regent Street, a revolver is absolutely so on Sakhalin. My interpreter, who had had three years' experience of the island, always insisted on my carrying it, whether I was going into the town or only for a couple of yards outside the door of our abode. There was only one occasion on which I left it behind, and that was when I went to call upon the Governor. It was morning, and I was in my dress-suit; and English tailors are not in the habit of supplying revolver pockets to dress-suits, hence its absence on this occasion. My companion, however, carried his, and we had but a short way to go. Unbleached cotton, a frieze *khalat*, and fetters form a more suitable costume for Sakhalin than a dress-suit, I admit; but etiquette demands this for a civilian presenting himself to the Governor, although a frock-coat suffices for an interview with his Imperial Majesty the Tsar.

It seemed odd at first to take a revolver instead of a Prayer-book to church, and a trifle out of place to make an afternoon call with such an article. At night it was

desirable to carry it in your hand, for a couple of seconds' delay might be fatal. In the streets of Alexandrovsk, after dark, we held them in our pockets ; but on the road to the jetty, through a bit of scrubby forest, it was well to have them free, and to keep a sharp look-out up and down the road.

In the day-time, I was advised, not to let anybody overtake me without observing him over my shoulder, and at night never to play the good Samaritan, for one of the ruses of the would-be murderer was to lie in the road, feigning to have been wounded.

Once warned of these many dodges, and well armed, one's chances were pretty fair. Safety seemed to lie in a good show of arms and watchfulness. Probably it sounds dangerous in the ears of a reader whose experience is confined to Western Europe, but it is not difficult to acclimatize one's self to any atmosphere ; and I may assure him that he would have found it so after a few days on Sakhalin. I shall think, not that I have exaggerated, but that I have presented a picture out of proportion, if, warned and fully armed against danger as I was, the reader imagines that I was in any greater peril than thousands who returned from the South African war without a scratch.

A Polish woman on Sakhalin once wished me God-speed in the words, "May God give you to live long, and have long nails to scratch your way through life," but personally, it may be purely from a Western habit, I prefer to keep my nails short; and another Russian proverb current on Sakhalin was more to my liking, viz. "It is better to have one friend than one hundred rubles." Certainly I was indebted to many for friendly warnings. One morning I passed on the road a man who had eight murders to his credit, and half an hour later he was pointed out hovering around our hut; but, warned against letting him approach me to ask for a light, I took up my

revolver and steel stick and returned to the town without hindrance.

It may seem inexplicable how a man could have committed so many murders and be still at liberty. A murderer of this stamp has generally committed more than one before he is captured in the first instance, and, once outside the prison walls in Siberia and on Sakhalin, the *taiga* shelters him from the penalty of his further deeds. Time passes by, and, if captured, he is either unidentified, or it is impossible to get evidence to convict him; and, besides, it only involves a further addition to his sentence, and the island itself is a prison. Unless the matter is likely to reach the ears of the Governor-general, it does not matter much if one "villain" murders another, and escapes until the noise blows over. It is only "one of this brutal crowd the less;" but if it be an official who is killed, prompt measures are at once taken. At Vladivostok I was shown by an anthropologist, Dr. K., a photograph of a Sakhalin assassin who had committed no less than nineteen murders.

Another warning reached me one morning when I was least expecting it. My interpreter came from the kitchen, soon after our return from the interior, looking much perturbed, and I asked him what was the matter. He said he was afraid there was some plot on; that I, as a stranger, was of course believed to be rich; and, further, that he and I had been mistaken for the two prospectors, one of whom was reported to have given a convict a beating for refusing to do as he was told, and reprisals were being meditated. This much he had pieced together from what he had heard from the convict servant who had recently been rescued from the claws of Patrin. The man could not be got to say more, for he had already told enough to incriminate himself with his companions, and bring down the punishment of his *artel* upon him. But he had gone the length of threatening my interpreter, that if he allowed me to go

out alone in the streets in daylight, and I were shot, he would report him to the Governor. The servant evinced his sincerity by insisting upon accompanying me himself that night to Mr. A.'s, and wished to come for me on my return, but my host promised to drive me home. In the darkness—it was not safe to carry lights—we nearly drove over a watchman, who suddenly sprang his rattle and leapt out of the way. At the next turn, in swinging round the corner by the barracks, one of a group of convicts fell upon Mr. A. I was sitting upon his right, my hand on my revolver at the time, but my companion was equal to the occasion. He is a big, burly man, and with a loud "*Stupay*" ("Get away") he hurled the man off, and the *proletka* (little victoria) swept on. From that time my interpreter and I kept a rather sharper look-out, but nothing more than the usual alarms occurred.

Outside of the town it was advisable to carry a rifle, in addition to a revolver. We travelled thus accoutred even to Due, which is distant only about four miles as the crow flies, and eight by the road. It is an old and well-used road, but continues to-day to add to its melancholy records. Due itself, as the site of the oldest of the coal mines, was for long the most important settlement on the island.

Our *troika* ascended the hills by a steep zigzag, which yielded picturesque views of the open valley left behind of Alexandrovsk and the two silvery streaks of the Little and the Great Alexandrovka rivers. Further inland was the village of Korsakovsk, set in the midst of a chess-board of gardens which supply Alexandrovsk and even Nikolaevsk, on the mainland, with vegetables. Down at the foot of the hill which we were climbing was a tunnel, looking no bigger than a mouse-hole. This was the coal mine where a score of convicts were at work in the intervals of their marauding expeditions. The great hill slopes, in process of being cleared, were brown with the tree-stumps left as it were by some giant scythe. Our *troika* breasted hills

A NIGHT WATCHMAN, ALEXANDROVSK.

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which no ordinary English hackney would have taken; until, nearing the top, the gradient diminished, and the road plunged into the *taiga*. Here we came upon a black cross by the wayside, one of three erected to the memory of persons murdered on the road during the previous year (1900). The first was to a merchant who had fallen under the hands of Barratasvili and his band. The next was also to a merchant who had gone for a walk from Alexandrovsk, and had sat down on a seat which stands in front of the cross, when, without warning, *brodyagi* emerged from the *taiga*, and before he could turn, knocked him down and killed him. Another cross was passed just before reaching Due, but its story is unknown to me.

Passing the mouth of one of the convict coal mines, and following the trolley route down to the jetty, we came out upon the beach, and dashing along, now upon dry sand and then through the rising tide, the remainder of our ride may be described as in a *troika* by land and sea.

Due, with its one little street in a narrow valley opening to the sea, is a pleasant contrast to Alexandrovsk. It wears the aspect of village life. As we sped up the street one knew that at that house lived the doctor, there the priest; here was the school, there the baker's. There was a feeling of family life in the air, and the houses, each different in style, with their whitewashed fronts and bright green shutters, were a relief to the sombre brownness and greyness of Alexandrovsk. Our *troika* drew up at Mr. X.'s cottage, a tiny box-like log-hut, consisting of one room and a tiny ante-room for kitchen. It was his own, for he had borrowed money to buy it against the time when his sentence should expire; otherwise, as an "exile settler," he would have been liable to be sent anywhere at the will of the Chief of the exile department. The ownership of a house gives the right to dwell in the settlement in which it is situated. He had two convict servants, who were on

half duty, as they were not well; and they gave their services to Mr. X. in spare time for a small consideration.

My companion showed me with pride round his little den, chief among the treasures of which were photographs of his father and of his wife and children, whom he had not seen for so many years. We had scarcely looked round when a uniformed messenger stood at the door, with the request of the Chief of the prison to know who the stranger was.

As I have already mentioned, the *nachálnik* of the Due prison bore a good reputation, and we found ourselves welcomed to dinner by him and his good wife. The talk began in a safe direction, the hostess and myself comparing notes on the Koreans, she having met many in the course of the years she had lived at Vladivostok. When, however, a bowl of soup, a sample of that intended for the prisoners, was brought in to be tasted by the Chief, conversation drifted round to matters nearer home. We talked of the last escape of prisoners from Alexandrovsk, he appealing for excuse to the dearth of warders, whose numbers were not by any means up to their tabulated strength, since many allocated to Sakhalin were really engaged in the bureaux, *e.g.* the Chancellerie, etc. The staff of warders is undermanned, and St. Petersburg objects to increased expenditure. The difficulties of the Russian penal administration have largely been a question of expense, and yet if peculation were not rife, and officials were less bent on gambling and drinking, and more on obtaining even decent conditions for the convicts in their charge, most of the evil could be swept away.

Our conversation had not continued long before, rather suddenly and pregnantly he put the question, "What do you think of Patrin? Is he as well known in England as in America?" The reputation of Patrin, the brutal Chief of the Alexandrovsk prison, is by no means confined to Siberia, for such is his fame in San Francisco that he

has been represented on the stage there as the prison demon.

The story is told on Sakhalin how a convict who escaped from the island to America, was arrested there and lay in prison accused of murder, where an enterprising interviewer, thinking to learn some interesting and sensational details from the accused, visited him. He obtained disappointingly little from him, owing to the man's small stock of English; but to one of the questions the journalist put, "Would you prefer to go back to your *patria?*" came the unexpected reply, "No, I would rather be hanged than go back to Patrin!"

So well known to his brother officials was Patrin's character, that only because they were all in the same boat can one account for his retaining his position. It is even more surprising that he had not been assassinated. Barratasvili had meant to accomplish it, but did not live to fulfil his intentions. The Chief used to pass us, driving furiously about Alexandrovsk, carrying a Winchester in addition to his police pistol; and in the prison he commonly went about with a revolver in one hand, for, big man as he was, he took all precautions when striking a prisoner.

Let me answer the *nachalnik's* question, "What do you think of Patrin?" by two or three stories concerning him. The reader will hope, as I do, that the day may be very near when the inmates of the Alexandrovsk prison will be freed from his tyranny.

Not long before I landed on the island the story of his criminal assault on a child of ten had even found its way into the Vladivostok papers, but the affair was hushed up by means of the powerful ruble. One whose authority on Sakhalin stands unquestioned has said, "The officials commit the very crimes for which the prisoners in their charge are convicted," and if any confirmation of this were needed we have it in the following Reuter's telegram, dated April 16, 1902. "The Irkutsk court proceeds to

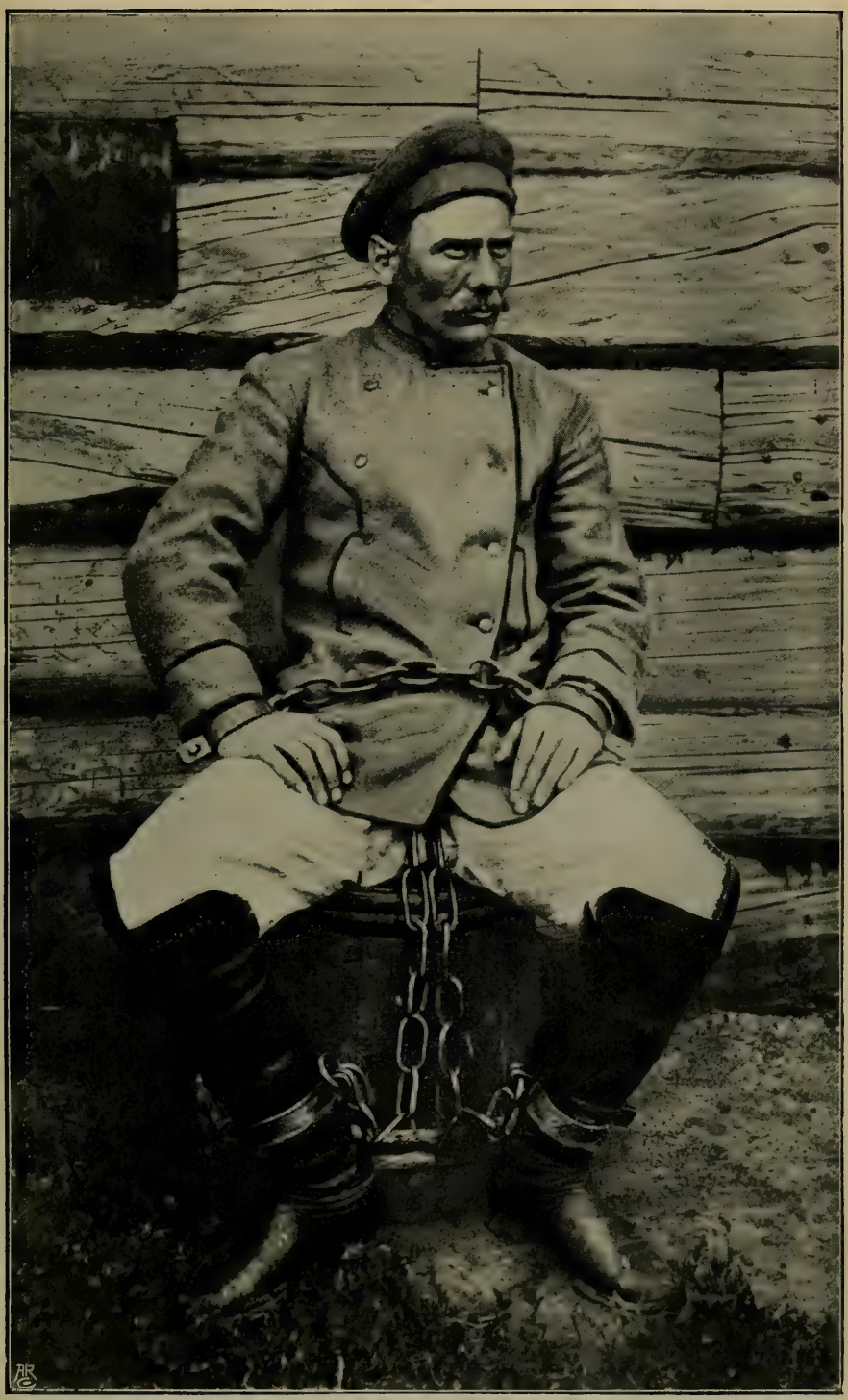
Saghalien to try almost the entire convict staff for forgery, embezzlement, fraud, and offences against public morality."

I will not dwell upon Patrin's behaviour with the women prisoners. Many were the stories current among officials of his cruelty to prisoners, of his arbitrary confinement of them in the dark cells, of the *plet* ordered out of spite, and of his fatal assaults on prisoners when he was overseer.

I give here two stories of his behaviour to *officials*, and it may be judged from these, what his conduct towards convicts has been and is. The first incident happened while I was at Alexandrovsk, and the other previously, during my companion's incarceration in the prison.

The overseer of the post-house where we obtained our *troika* found one afternoon two of his *izvostchiki* drunk and fighting. He ran down into the courtyard and separated them, but not before he had had to strike one of them. The latter immediately went off to Patrin, and complained that the overseer was drunk, and had made a disturbance, etc. When the overseer, who had gone to fetch his wife, returned, he found the Chief of the prison there, who, without warning, struck him a blow in the face. Blood flowed from his mouth, and in his half-stunned condition he appeared to be making for the river close by, but soon lost consciousness. When he came to, he went to the Chief of the district, informed him, and claimed damages, because for one officer to strike another, like a convict, was no small offence. The district Chief, however, deprecated any scandal, and advised him to let it blow over.

Under such a man were the political exiles in prison; and to him those living in Alexandrovsk would have had to apply for their rations, had they not foregone their claim, and striven, by their own exertions, to keep body and soul together. While my interpreter was yet in prison, at the beginning of his term on Sakhalin, he had to



A DESPERATE CHARACTER. [*To face page* 363.

undergo several unpleasant interviews with Patrin. His story not only illustrates the arbitrary and uncontrolled behaviour of the prison-master towards officials; but also the class of obstinate criminal occasionally to be dealt with, rendered more so in this case by the arbitrary conduct of the official before whom he had to appear.

Mr. X. said: "I had gone at the stated time when the Chief held audience to beg permission to be let out of the criminals' prison and live in lodgings. I could see Patrin through the doorway, sitting at his table, and inquiring of the overseers in the ante-room who were friendly if he were in a good mood, they assured me that it was a favourable moment. 'Don't wait,' they said, 'until the convicts come; he is in a beautiful temper now!' As fate would have it, however, whilst I was standing behind a soldier, waiting my opportunity of a pause in the Chief's writing, an overseer entered, and, unfortunately, fell out with his superior. I heard Patrin say, 'Hold your tongue!'

"The overseer replied, 'I will not hold my tongue. You must not speak to me like that. I am not a convict, but an officer, like yourself.'

"The Chief, now roused, cried out, 'Hold your tongue!' The other, flushing up, drew his revolver, and flinging it down excitedly on the table, exclaimed in an angry voice, 'I resign at once. I will not serve under such a——!'

"There seemed little hope for me now," continued my interpreter, "but I still lurked behind the soldier, letting several convicts come and go, in the hope that the Chief would calm down. But once more fate was against me, for there came along a young, slim convict, one difficult to deal with, and possessed of an irascible temper.

"He entered, stepping boldly forward, and said, 'You may say what you like, but I shall do what I like.'

"The Chief rose, and asked, 'What did you say?'

"The other replied, as brazen-faced as ever, 'I can't work, and I tell you I won't!'

"At this, Patrin, who was standing scarcely a pace off, struck him on the jaw with his right fist, and followed it up by a blow with the left. I shrank back horrified," said Mr. X., "and then ensued an extraordinary scene. The young fellow, who was slight of build and not tall, seized the Chief by his coat, and dragged him to the steps. For the moment Patrin seemed powerless, but recovering himself, called to the overseers who were sitting motionless on the bench. They roused up as if awakened from sleep, and stepping forward, flung themselves upon the prisoner. For a time I could see nothing but a forest of arms, at one moment flung in the air, and the next coming down like flails on the body of the convict, and still the Chief was in the grasp of the prisoner. It was a terrible *mêlée*, and the whole group was unsuspectingly gravitating towards the flight of stairs. It was impossible to stop the moving mass, which drew nearer and nearer until it ultimately fell headlong down the steps. Patrin was on the top, and came off practically unhurt, but the prisoner, who had already been pounded and mauled, had several ribs broken." All through his term the man had been very recalcitrant, and during the spring of 1901 he seized the revolver of one of the soldiers on duty and shot him. He made no attempt to escape, but standing calmly there, said, "I did not want to shoot him; it was Patrin I wanted." And then, pointing the weapon once more, shot himself in the forehead.

Among the hundreds of undoubted villains on the island there are naturally some of an extremely refractory type, but at the same time there are several of the prisoners who would be reckoned innocent in England. One of this latter class was a very holy old man, of wide reading, who had developed views after the type of Count Tolstoy's. His home was in South Russia, and there he began to teach the doctrine of non-resistance. The authorities immediately pounced upon, arrested him for creating a riot,

THE DARK CELLS (OR "CACHOTS NOIRS"), ALEXANDROVSK PRISON.

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and sentenced him to eight years' hard labour. Thus he found himself in prison at Alexandrovsk with the most abandoned criminals. A saintly, dignified old man, a little eccentric perhaps, he always refused to shake hands, even with a *barin*, and with a courteous gesture of excuse would hold up his right hand in blessing. A fellow-prisoner of his said that he had never known him do a wrong or unkind act; and yet he had been condemned by Patrin more than once to chains and the dark cell. The accompanying picture is an illustration of one of the dark cells in the Alexandrovsk prison. It was described to me by one who had often to pass it, as absolutely without any accommodation, plank-bed or *parasha*, filthy and malodorous beyond conception.

It is my impression that there is less of this sentencing of religionists to hard labour to-day than there used to be. I say "my impression," for I cannot appeal to statistics of sufficient value. On Sakhalin there were (January 1, 1898) sixty-seven of this class (of whom three were women) undergoing hard labour. The cases that I came across were all of some standing. I will quote one more, and this time it is that of a Mussulman. He was a rich man, of liberal thought and much learning, and hailed from Kazan. Having studied Christian doctrine and been duly impressed by it, he attempted to teach a kind of eclectic Islamism and Christianity. It resulted in his being arrested for founding a new sect, and sent for fifteen years' hard labour to Sakhalin. His enemies accused him of fanaticism, yet it could not be denied that, through all, he continued to urge his brethren to live peaceably and honourably; and for this he was sentenced with criminals of the worst description.

Here follow two cases of men condemned for criminal acts, who can scarcely be said to have merited their punishment. My informant had had access to the official *précis* of the cases from which he culled the following. The first

was that of a poor man in South Russia caught in the act of stealing a loaf. The theft was admitted, but because he had a knife in his pocket (what peasant does not carry a knife?) his crime was, technically, robbery under arms, and his sentence eight years' hard labour on Sakhalin; which really meant life-long punishment, for, as I have said before, few ever get away from the island. It mattered not that the man had been driven by hunger, perhaps by starving children, to the petty theft, he must expiate it with a life's exile. Surely such a punishment does not "fit the crime." The accused is reckoned guilty until he can prove himself innocent; and to inculpate, not to do justice, is the logical sequence of such a system. Circumstantial evidence is sufficient to convict, and the benefit of the doubt is not a Russian conception; but the miscarriage of criminal justice is as nothing to the great blot on the system, the "administrative process" by which political offenders are imprisoned or banished without trial, a system which is obviously adopted because of the want of sufficient evidence to convict.

The second criminal case was one in which the probability of innocence would have cleared the accused in any English court of law. The subjects of it were two Kazaks. The *précis* began with the story of the marriage of a nephew of these two brothers. The young couple were handsome and very well off, and everybody wondered why, with the best prospects and everything they could wish for, they were unhappy. One day the nephew came to his uncles and complained that his life was embittered, for his wife had become the mistress of her step-father. Taxed with it she alleged that she had yielded simply to save her mother from being ill-treated by the step-father. Soon after this the latter was found murdered. The two Kazak uncles were arrested, tried, and are now dragging out a miserable existence on Sakhalin. On what evidence they were convicted the *précis* states. Near by where the body

of the victim was found, were cart-wheel tracks, and these were claimed to coincide with those made by the carts owned by the uncles. Doubtless this was so, for similar country carts were owned by hundreds around. Further, a piece of strap alleged to belong to the harness of the two brothers was found near by. It probably did, but the whole strap had been missing for some months, taken by the nephew on one of his visits, and, not being of importance, had not been inquired for.

Everything pointed to the nephew as the author of the crime for which these two men were undergoing life-long banishment; but the above evidence was sufficient to condemn the two uncles for murder.

I do not intend the reader to take this case as typical of Sakhalin convicts, for I do not believe it to be so. Not the miscarriage of justice, but the faulty administration of the penal system, is the glaring defect on the island; yet the glimpse which these cases, and one more which I shall quote, give of the lives of those banished to Sakhalin was one which the inquirer came across on the island, and goes to make up the sum of the social cosmos.

The irony of the third case was that the prisoner's term had expired on his arrival on Sakhalin, and when I met him he had been three years on the island. When I learned his crime, I thanked my stars that I was not a Russian subject, for I might have been guilty, and perhaps already had been guilty, unwittingly, of the same. He had attempted to pass a forged three-ruble note. Now, there are not a few forged notes about in Russia, and it is easy to be deceived by them. The question should have been, after all, one of intention. Mr. X., who knew him very well, believed he was incapable of it. But even supposing him to have been guilty, again the punishment could scarcely be said to "fit the crime." My interpreter and I found the man, a Caucasian, in a little wooden house with clean whitewashed walls and muslin-curtained windows,

and the usual prints of the Tsar and Tsaritsa on the walls. We were engaged in negotiations with him to join forces, in pursuance of our plans to reach the Ainus overland. He had been sent out from Odessa on the *Yaroslav*, upon which my interpreter was likewise a passenger, in chains; and having been stricken down with fever during the sea voyage, Mr. X. had attended him under the doctor's instructions, and had been the means of saving his life. He was therefore devoted to my companion, and while we were talking a curious opportunity of showing his gratitude presented itself. I have already referred to the freemasonry which exists among the convicts. They have their code of honour, and when Mr. Y., the ex-convict merchant, had some six hundred rubles' worth of trinkets stolen from a show-case in his stores, several of the convicts personally expressed their regret that such a thing should have happened to "one of themselves." Hundreds of secrets were kept, at least from the officials, though they were often told to us, or, rather, to my companion. My interpreter happened to mention that when most of his effects were stolen from him during the time he was schoolmaster at the village of Arkovo, one thing he had especially regretted the loss of, and that was a ring given him by his wife. With a quick vehemence the Caucasian exclaimed, "Why did you not tell me before? I know the man who has it. I would have got it for you, had I known. I will get it! You have only to say the word, and I'll get the devil for you!" He had done all but a couple of months of his term before leaving Russia, which had expired on the journey out, and yet now, unless he could accumulate money, he would never be able to get back to Russia; and even if successful, not before twelve years had elapsed. He must go through his stage as an "exile settler" for six years on Sakhalin, and as "peasant" for another six years on the mainland, if he can get there. After that the law allows him to return to Europe, but

neither to St. Petersburg nor Moscow, if he hails from either of those cities. The Chief of the district may give permission to a prisoner soon after the termination of his sentence to go to the mainland, if he has the promise of employment; but this does not affect the further twelve years' absence from Russia.

The reason, as I have already mentioned, why ninety-nine out of every hundred never get away from the island, why the law in this respect is inoperative, is because the prisoner has no one to influence a merchant or employer to offer him a berth, or he has been unable to save sufficient to travel to find one, or to buy himself into a commune, the latter alone costing him perhaps fifty or sixty rubles. Many have too hard a fight to get a living at all, not to mention those who succumb under a load of debt; and yet the longing for home is there, deep and enduring. Even if a man's time be legally up and he has sufficient means, it does not follow that he will straightway get off, and the following will explain in some cases why.

On my way to Mr. A.'s I had to pass by the school-house, which is on the right-hand side, higher up the road on to which the prison faces. The school is a mixed one, and I cannot better describe one of the many games played, which throws light on the treatment of "exile-settlers" after their six years' further residence on Sakhalin has expired, than in the words of the newspaper *Vladivostok*, excerpted and translated by Mr. Zhook in "Free Russia."

Here is the game of "superintendent of the settlements" (Chief of the exile department).

"One of the boys, copying the manner of the superintendent, sits down, stretching himself upon a chair; another comes up with an oral petition, saying—

"'Yer honour, show us God's grace, put us on the peasants' list; it's six years that I'm an exile *(posselénets)*, and have not been noticed for anything!'

"'I don't want to. Get away with you!'

"'Yer honour, I don't owe the Crown anything.'

"'Warder, kick him out!'

"'Will you allow me to apply to the governor (Chief) of the district?'

"'What! To the governor? Warder, take him under arrest! I will show you peasantry. Wait a bit!' he shouts. 'Let him be put to hard labour for fourteen days!'

"The applicant pretends to be crying, and says, 'Yer honour, don't ruin me; forgive me, I'll go back home!'

"Just then there resounds a slap on the face, and the word 'Take him!' is uttered; the culprit is taken away."

Some, in the hopelessness of despair, have drowned their sorrows in drink. One such I met during the last week of my stay. I had been to call on our landlady's old parents to order, I believe, the little vehicle they kept for hire, and there I found a lodger, a man still in the prime of life, who was now in the eyes of the law a "peasant," but had been a judge in Siberia. There was no doubt of his being an educated man, and I give his story, which I had no means of verifying, as it was told me by one who had heard it from his lips.

It appears that, during his occupation of the bench, he and the wife of the president of his court became enamoured of one another, and the lady intrigued to get her husband removed to another part of Siberia, whither she might, with some show of reason, refuse to follow him. In order to compass her object, she destroyed several papers referring to cases in hand, amongst which, unknown to her, were some of the highest importance to the judge, her lover. It was he, and not her husband, who had to flee, and after many adventures, and in spite of all the wonderful espionage of the Russian police, he succeeded in reaching the German frontier. But at the last moment, when trying to pass in company with some Jews, he was arrested for being without a passport. He

disclaimed all knowledge of kindred and home, and was sentenced as a *brodyaga* to one and a half years' hard labour on Sakhalin. He had long since completed his time, and was now trying to drown his sorrows in drink. He accosted me with a "How d'ye do?" and wished me "good-bye" in English, though with a very marked accent.

Two or three days later I passed another exile who had also been within an ace of escaping from his country. He was driving his little *telyega*, bringing in farm produce to Alexandrovsk. It was no less a person than Count Marovsk, who had been transported to Siberia in the first instance for a political crime. He had at one time not only succeeded in escaping, but in getting as far as St. Petersburg. Unfortunately, in the streets of that city he met an officer of the gendarmerie, who instantly recognizing him, greeted him with an astonished "You here! Why, how did you come all this distance?"

With all the concentrated hatred of the old *noblesse* for the *nouveaux riches*, the count quick as lightning drew his revolver, and saying, "For that I came," shot him.

He was immediately arrested, and sentenced to fifteen years on Sakhalin. He is an old man now. His time is done, but he remains an "exile-settler," with his own little house and plot of land.

CHAPTER XIX

STORIES OF CRIMES IN ALEXANDROVSK

Chinese prisoners—An armed escort—Church service—A night for deeds of darkness—Tunnelling and firing houses—An employer of assassins—Sakhalin; the Utopia of no taxes—The power of the ruble.

ABOUT a fortnight after the return from the interior, the rooms which my interpreter and I were occupying having been already promised to others, we left our good host, the ex-overseer of the prison, and went to share the little house belonging to the petty customs officer, close to the *pristan*. A scrubby wood separated the jetty from the town, and there were only one or two other houses near by, besides the lazaret opposite, and the long customs and quarantine sheds.

These latter had been the home of Chinese prisoners during the previous winter. At the outbreak of the Boxer insurrection the Russians had seized, near Port Arthur, Hung Tung Shu, a military instructor who had studied in England, and all his artillery school, consisting of 138 Chinese youths. These were all deported to Sakhalin, and the authorities tried to make them work—some said actually set them to labour in the mines, but this I cannot verify. Hung Tung Shu was sufficiently *au courant* with international law to make effective representations, and the prisoners of war were eventually supplied with food, and a bullock to draw their loads. As might have been expected, the latter was soon killed or stolen by *brodyagi*. I met one

of the prisoners at Alexandrovsk, but the rest had left earlier in the year.

Our new host was engaged by day, and sometimes at night, in duty on the jetty. For nineteen years he had been in Government service, and for a great part of that time responsible for the tracking of convicts. A strong, sturdy, and rather fiery individual—a Little Russian, and they are by repute quick tempered—he looked as if he could give a good account of himself; and yet, accustomed as he was for years to facing these outlaws of the *taiga*, and protected by the fear of summary execution, which was the fate of a murderer of officials, he had his times when he was unnerved. One evening he left us to go down the road to the town. He had scarcely gone a quarter of a mile, not so far as the straggling wood, when he discovered that he had forgotten his revolver. He confessed to us afterwards—"I came all over hot, and in a fright turned back; then, thinking of all the years I had hunted *brodyagi*, I was ashamed to return, and sat down on a stone." Fortunately, his wife observing that he had left his revolver behind, sent one of the two convict servants whom she could trust, who found his master sitting by the wayside.

The insecurity of life and property on Sakhalin presses very hardly upon the thrifty and respectable peasant, and upon the families of the officials. They can never feel sure of their own or their children's lives. The wife of the Little Russian with whom we were then lodging had by long residence become emboldened sometimes to delay her return home until after dark, but always with a man-servant or friend as companion. Very occasionally, taking her revolver, she would venture on to the jetty in the evening to fetch her husband home; but this was a stone's throw off, and armed sentries guarded the approach to the *pristan*.

On the evening before we moved to their abode she

had narrowly escaped being held up. She was being driven to Alexandrovsk, with a woman friend, to visit her parents. It was already dusk, and before they had got a quarter of a mile from the house the horse shied and sprang aside, and a head and shoulders popped out of the ditch by the roadside. The *izvostchik* called out, "Who's there?" and the outlaw, who, in the darkness, had thought the women were alone, made off into the wood.

On another occasion a thrifty, industrious ex-convict came to me at my request to fetch some sealskins to be dressed. It was the evening of October 16, and the previous night there had been a storm, which I shall have occasion to mention, for a gale on Sakhalin means the opportunity for dark deeds. Everybody seemed to be in a state of alarm after the doings of the previous night, and this man was no exception, for though big and tall, and with but a mile to go, he refused, even at 6 p.m., to take the sealskins with him, lest he should be robbed.

Our new dwelling was a little square wooden house, divided into four small rooms, opening the one into the other. Our host was comfortably off, but even to the eyes of an English cottager the place would have looked bare. Of course there were no carpets, not even a mat; two or three tables and chairs and a form, with two cupboards containing the wardrobes and other effects of the family, and a great wooden chest, made up the inventory. The contents of the last-named article aroused my curiosity, and, on inquiry, I learned that it contained a hundredweight of lump-sugar. Perhaps the most interesting room of all was the kitchen, for our hostess kept open house. In fact, on one day, she told us, she had made tea seventeen times. It was a handy house of call for people arriving or departing by sea.

The island of Sakhalin, both Russian and native, is still in the old days of hospitality before such "modern" notions as inns or hotels had taken shape, and our new

abode was found to be a handy place of call. The welcome by no means spent itself at the end of a glass of tea, and this for a very good reason, since the uncertainty of the arrival of vessels sometimes stranded the would-be passengers at our domicile. For people who regarded their time as important, and there were one or two such on the island, there was a most aggravating fickleness about the behaviour of vessels.

One day, hearing that Mr. Y., who was taking messages for me, was leaving that day for Vladivostok, I strolled down to the end of the jetty to wish him "good speed." There I found most of the official world assembled, including the Chief of the district, the head pope, and several others whose acquaintance I had made, busily engaged in the usual accompaniment of farewells—drinking. Several of the party were leaving, the Rikovsk doctor for Vladivostok, somebody else for Japan, and others for the mainland, before the cessation of navigation. The steamer had been descried on the horizon, and was steadily nearing the shore. Good-byes were said, and, stepping outside, I shook hands with Mr. Y., and wished him "*bon voyage*," when he turned suddenly, and, pointing to the ship, said, "Mais, je ne vais pas partir, voyez vous, le vaisseau s'est tourné et retourne à De Castries!" It was clear she dared not stand in closer, the westerly breeze being too strong, in the absence of a safe anchorage, and there remained nothing but to return to the mainland for refuge. So there would be another farewell later, with the usual accompaniment, and perhaps, even a second and a third. Such glorious uncertainty was responsible at times for filling our kitchen to overflowing.

Sometimes it was a whole family—father, mother, and children—who made their bed on the floor, while the convict servants stretched themselves along the bench. At another time it was a young woman with three or four children, who had to be housed for two or three days, waiting for

their vessel. But of all the curious company which that kitchen held during my stay, a party which dropped in for refreshment one afternoon was the strangest. It was the day before we had set out for Due. An ex-convict merchant, having 3,000 rubles upon him, and fearing attack, had cast about how to bring them safely from Due to Alexandrovsk. I have already described the road, from which the reader will see that he was wise to take precautions. He had got together as escort three Caucasian convicts. It was these that I now saw gathered in the kitchen, and a more sunken-eyed, deep-browed, cut-throat lot, armed with rakish-looking daggers at their belts, I don't wish to meet. I thought I would rather have taken my chance with the *brodyagi*. The merchant certainly had cause to congratulate himself on his escape, for his son had been passing along the same road that very week, when two men armed with guns leaped out upon him from the forest. Fortunately, before they had seriously injured him, he was recognized, and, with the delightful *naïveté* and *sang-froid* of the Sakhalin *brodyagi*, they exclaimed, "It wasn't you we wanted, but your father!"

Immunity rendered the convicts bold. One morning I passed two drunken men rolling up the street, within earshot of an approaching official, talking loudly of a certain robbery for which their mates had been imprisoned, and boldly declaring that they would get them out. From their talk I felt pretty sure that they had committed the offence, and when I found them in Mr. Y.'s store making unusual purchases of stuffs my suspicions were further confirmed.

We were still standing in the store waiting for a reply to an inquiry about vessels, when two elderly convicts came in. They were talking, and did not pause in their conversation. One of them wanted to sell his hut, and was offering it to the other, who, however, did not seem to be much tempted, so, as a further inducement, the first said, "Look here! I'll sell you the hut and the old

woman too!" At first I thought it a bit of Sakhalin humour, but it was grim reality.

Notwithstanding the vagaries of steamers, lodgers, however, were occasional, and in the ordinary course our two convict servants slept in the kitchen alone. One of them we trusted, but the other, having robbed our landlady, had to be dismissed, and from that time we were continually changing. Some of them were murderers, and our host, being an under-official, had not, of course, the first choice of these prison-birds.

The kitchen was entered through a porch from out-of-doors, and opened by a door without latch into the room in which I slept with my goods and chattels. Another door gave access from my room into the next, but this had a bolt. However, notwithstanding I and the convicts were thus shut off to ourselves, and that they could communicate undisturbed with friends outside, it is only fair to say that they made no attempt to murder me or possess themselves of my effects. For myself, I always slept with my loaded six-chamber under my pillow, but perhaps it is as well that they did not know I was a heavy sleeper.

Winter begins, or should do so on Sakhalin, on October 1 (N.S. 14th), and the second windows, giving double resistance to cold and draught, were duly put in and caulked on that date.

Thenceforward we depended for fresh air on what might filter through when the outer door was open. A tiny pane, it is true, in *one* of the windows was opened by the application of considerable force and at my special request, and left ajar for a few minutes before breakfast. The same day marked two other events in the Sakhalin Kalendar, the doling out of winter clothing to the prisoners, and the anniversary of the appearance of the Virgin Mary to the Archbishop of Constantinople, when, by holding a veil over the city, she signified her protection of it against the heathen.

October 1 is therefore a feast-day, and on arriving in the church, an ornate wooden structure, we found a full congregation of officials and exiles. All were standing, as is usual in Russian churches, many talking and chatting about business matters or prison news; while the service, which began at eight and ended only at eleven, was going on. Behind the rood screen, and barely visible through its network of carving, moved three priests with long flowing hair, in gorgeous crimson and golden robes. They were intoning while a choir of small boys sang. There was a considerable amount of bowing and of changing places, and mixed with it all strange noises rising almost to howls and falling to grunts. Then very impressively the gates of the screen swung open, and the head pope, with whom I had travelled down the Amur, came slowly forward, holding a large gilt cross, with which he made the sign of the cross to the congregation. The communion of wine, mixed with water, and bread was next administered to children under the age of six, and the congregation stood silent while the priests poured the contents of the spoon into the mouths of the babes-in-arms, who were screaming and kicking. The priest meanwhile was looking furtively, and rather irreverently, I thought, out of the corners of his eyes in various directions. Then followed a short sermon, quite a good address, my interpreter said, and a collection. During the service Patrin, who towered head and shoulders over most around him, was selling sacred candles, for he was one of the churchwardens.

After the collection another portion of the service was read, and then one of the priests, taking an *aspergillus*, which was by no means a "little brush," but resembled a whitewasher's, began to sprinkle the congregation in turn with holy water. The first to go up was the Governor, and, solemn as the rite was meant to be, I could not resist the sense of the ludicrous when the great brush came down with a smack upon his bald head.

The climate of Sakhalin has its extremes, as we have seen in the short sketch given in Chapter VI., but the cold is a dry cold. A doctor assured me that there were no cases of consumption on the island, except among the Kirghiz and South Asian races, who could not stand the severity of winter; and, though there are regions of swamps, infectious diseases have not yet got a hold sufficient to make these exhalations dangerous.

Fogs are less prevalent on the island than has been generally believed, and, as the meteorological observer remarked to me, owing to the presence of a branch of the Kuro Siwo from Japan, and a cold stream from the Okhotsk Sea, aërial currents are lively, and the fog cannot stand still as in England, where a practically equable temperature exists on the surrounding seas.

The weather for the most part during this, the middle of October, had been cold and clear, with frosts at night. The wind from the north was not unlike our east winds in March; then, with a veering to the south, would come a day or two of showers, followed by an October day, sunny and bright. No healthy Englishman would have thought of wearing an overcoat on such a day, though the soldiers huddled their great *khalati* around them, and *shubi* had already begun to appear in the streets. Away to the west, the coast of the mainland, sixty miles distant, was clearly visible, and towards sundown, strolling out alone on the jetty, I watched the great Sol bathing the snow-capped mountains in his rosy light, and waited the lead-colouring waves and the creeping shadows all along the lone coast as he sank into the deep waters. At such times the loneliness and separation of the exile from the outer world came over me, and I had a glimpse into the bitterness of his banishment, the dying down of long-deferred hope into the colourless, dull leaven of despair.

The summits of the mountains had long been covered with snow, but the white mantle crept but slowly down

their sides. The old weather-wise said that they had never known the snow so long delayed. It should have fallen, according to their account, for good about October 26, not to disappear until the following April. They did not know then that King Winter was going to make up in intensity for this short respite, for the winter of 1901–2 was extraordinarily severe throughout Siberia.

If Sakhalin has its bright and clear days, it also has its storms, when men and women turn in their beds and pray that no deeds of darkness shall endanger their home. I remember more than one such night, but the one which seemed to unnerve most was that of October 15–16. The wind had risen, and all the steamers had bolted over to De Castries. Beginning earlier in the east, it had worked round to a stiff south-westerly breeze, ending at length in a north-westerly gale. The storm was howling through the rafters, and the wild waves were dashing in fury over the jetty. The great lighters, which were fastened and refastened to the inner side of the T-shaped *pristan*, were threatening every moment to break loose, snap their bonds, and smash the jetty in their wild efforts to get loose. Sea birds, driven in by the storm, were whirling around the great rugged promontory; nobody was about that could be in. The sentries at the landward end of the jetty were vainly endeavouring to keep themselves warm, wrapping their voluminous felt overcoats once and again round them. With fingers numbed, they stood their bayonets in the sentry-boxes, and stamped up and down. Behind our dwelling, fifty yards away, was a roaring fire, in front of a nondescript shelter, which it threatened to lick up in the fury of the storm. Camped there were all sorts of disreputable characters, for it was a refuge for the outlawed. It was just such another night as that on which the six prisoners escaped from the prison at Alexandrovsk. All through the night the wind howled and the storm raged, and our hostess lay awake until it was light, crying at

intervals, "I hear them! I am sure I do! They are tunnelling under the house!" Such a night, less than a hundred years ago, the wreckers on the coast of Cornwall found their opportunity. So it is on Sakhalin, only it is from the land, and not the sea, that the wreckers profit.

In the town the tunnellers and wreckers of shops were at work. Of the many deeds of darkness revealed the next morning, to mention only one, a little store at which I had dealt, lying within a stone's throw of my first lodging, was broken into and stripped. It was situated exactly opposite the barracks on one side and the prison on the other; and yet, notwithstanding this and the fact that the owner and his family were sleeping in the house, some convicts in the middle of the night, and under cover of the storm, dug under the house, beginning in the road and coming to the floor, cut a hole in it, entered, and cleared the place.

Eight days later a similar, but worse, event took place. On the morning of October 24 we roused up about half-past five to find a fire in full blaze in the town. Being more than a mile distant from the scene, it at first looked as though the greater part of the town was alight; but as we were gradually able to locate it, we saw that it proceeded from the *bazar*. Our concern was not allayed by this, since it seemed probable that the house of a Sister, who was doing excellent work among the exiles, was involved; but, fortunately, as we learned from messengers, it was not so, but was confined to the house next door. This was occupied by an ex-convict merchant, against whom the incendiaries appeared to have had a grudge. They proceeded by their usual methods of tunnelling, and this notwithstanding the scene of operations was the public market-place. Cutting their way through the floor, and emerging in the store, they found, to their disappointment, no vodka. In the absence of any other spirit, they broke the necks of all the bottles of

eau de Cologne, drank the contents, and, seizing all they could carry away, set fire to the premises. The owner, to whom this was not a first experience, undisturbed by their "burgling," but aroused by the smoke, seized his revolver and rushed out into the market-place, firing several times to attract the attention of the police. No notice had been taken by the man on the watch-tower, a common institution in wooden-built towns in New Zealand and America, as well as Russia, and probably he was asleep; but the shots, or the police, aroused him, and he clanged the alarm-bell.

A fire-pump was sent down to the scene of the outbreak, but, as luck would have it, there was no reserve of water, although a store in buckets is supposed to be kept at the station. It remained only for water-carts, *i.e.* barrels on two wheels, to be found and sent down to the river to be filled. Of course these means were hopelessly and ludicrously inadequate.

By this time the Governor had arrived on the scene, and it was clear that the whole house was doomed. The old merchant, seeing that everything would be burnt, called to the spectators that they might help themselves, but the Governor would not allow it, and, ordering them to stand back, stationed a cordon of soldiers around the fire until all was consumed.

While, as I have said, a freemasonry does exist among the convicts, the bond is much loosened in a large settlement like Alexandrovsk, where the majority are strangers to one another; and this accounts for these attacks on one another. The immediate cause is generally revenge or spite, and sometimes envy of success or good fortune. The chance of obtaining property of any description, even to a pair of boots, is a sore temptation to the professional criminal.

Two or three days after the storm a poor woman from Korsakovsk village, near Alexandrovsk, called on our host,

and told her story between bursts of crying. Somebody had stolen her all, her horse, which was worth, she said, 120 rubles, and her cow, which had cost ninety. She had probably borrowed money to buy them, which made it all the harder. We could not help her, but the officer promised to prevent their being sent by sea to Nikolaevsk, which the thieves might probably attempt to do.

Sometimes it is starvation, or the chance escape, that drives a convict to extremities. My interpreter told me that many had said to him, as he put it, "We cry, but we must kill," meaning, "We must murder, though we weep for our victim."

The most horrible case of recent murder was that by a man who called upon us one day to condone with him for his "bad treatment at the hands of the officials!" He was a merchant, and had had a young and beautiful Tartar wife. He grew suspicious, and accused her of flirting with others, until one day she disappeared, as it was generally supposed, with one of her lovers. Months passed by, and the true story began to leak out. It appeared that he had hired an assassin, at the current price of twenty-five rubles, to murder her as a faithless spouse, who, according to the law of Muhammad, merited death. The hired assassin completed his ghastly work, but he and his employer fell out about the terms. The merchant solved the difficulty by hiring another assassin to murder the first; but the second was not so successful, and, his victim recovering, tales began to circulate. Then a woman was emboldened to come forward, and she told how when she had been to get some bread of the merchant, she saw him actually making the noose ready to hang his wife, and, in a great fright, ran out of the shop, but not before he had threatened her life if she breathed a word. Now that the half-murdered man had told his version of the story, and it had been decided to arrest the merchant on his return from Nikolaevsk, she could no longer hold her tongue.

After all this had transpired, I passed the merchant driving in the street, and even met him in our dwelling. I inquired how it came about that he was free.

"Oh," was the reply, "the court does not come here until next July from Vladivostok."

"But I have seen poor men waiting under arrest, for their trial ten months hence, why not he?"

"Oh, well, he has a house and is a merchant, and so the officials let him loose. He cannot escape, and I expect he has made it all right with them."

When he called upon us the day before I left the island, he had been rearrested, and this time made to pay a bail of 500 rubles, for which he openly declared that he was very hardly treated.

A night or two previous one of his hired assassins knocked at our outer door about 9.30 p.m. The convict servant called out, "*Kto tam?*" ("Who's there?"), and recognizing his voice parleyed with him, but refused to open. He wanted a candle, he said, but they seemed to think it was my 500 rubles that he and his companions in league were after, and had chosen the opportunity of our host and hostess' absence to acquire. We kept ourselves in readiness for any attack through the windows, but we had the advantage of being shuttered on the inside, and the assassin had gained too little information to encourage him in the attempt.

To those who feel crushed by taxation and regard themselves as victims to the demands of a civilized Government, I would recommend Sakhalin as that long-desired land—a country free from taxes! Not even does the rate-collector haunt the doorsteps of unwilling ratepayers, for there are no rates to pay. It is true if you don't care for the well water you may pay a man sixpence a month to bring you water from the river; and if you value the services of the watchman in disturbing you with his rattle at night and apprising the burglars and thieves of his

whereabouts, you may give him a like sum. But strictly speaking you need pay nothing in rates or taxes for the privilege of residence on Sakhalin—nothing save insecurity of life and property.

The island, because of its position and climate, has sometimes been compared with Iceland, but in the matter of crime a greater contrast could not be found. There must be a larger number of crimes committed in proportion to the population on Sakhalin than anywhere else, whereas on Iceland the exact reverse would be true. It is said that in 1000 years two cases, both of thefts, have been recorded there. One was committed by a man who, having broken his arm, was suddenly deprived of the power to work. He was driven to the theft by hunger, and this being recognized, he was placed under medical care and put in the way of earning his living. The other was by a German, who had no such excuse, and was told to sell all his property, make good the damage done, and then leave the country, or be executed.

Such stern treatment for theft did not obtain on Sakhalin, and if one gilded the official palm he could get off even with honour. At the beginning of last year (1902) fifty pairs of peasants' shoes were stolen from the Government stores at Alexandrovsk, but as the price they fetched there was only thirty kopyeks, against one ruble in Nikolaevsk, the thief started for the latter place to sell them there. On his way, however, he was stopped by a soldier, his goods examined, and the Government stamp found inside them. He was therefore arrested and brought back to Alexandrovsk to be tried. While locked up in the guard-house the prisoner, who was a Caucasian, saw a friend and compatriot pass the window, and made signs begging him to get him free somehow. Thereupon this friend came to the police-office and made an arrangement, for a sum of ten rubles, to be allowed to change the Government shoes in question for others. This was done to the satisfaction

of all the parties concerned, the overseer of the *ispravnik* unlocking the door and superintending the exchange. When the trial came on, the accused said there must have been a mistake, the shoes were not Government ones, but had been made by the settlers; would the official examine them. The substituted shoes were brought in, and finding no Government stamp on them, the official begged the man's pardon for his wrongful arrest?

One more instance of the power of the ruble. A little while after the previous incident, fifteen tins of mutton-fat, weighing a pud each, disappeared from the Government stores. No trace of them could be found, and their loss created some disturbance, as the fat is very scarce and rather valuable on Sakhalin. Now in the market-place are several ramshackle shelters of no good reputation, into which thieves, being hard pressed, dive and vanish by underground passages; for some reason or other a raid was made on one of these, and in the cellar, amongst other things, were found three tins of this mutton-fat. The owner of the hut was arrested and brought before the overseer of the police. With much whimpering and many tears, the accused man begged him to take what he liked of his property rather than imprison him. "My time on Sakhalin will very soon be up, and if I am convicted again, I shall have another term and never be able to get back to the mainland."

"That is an old story," said the official in a stern tone, "and won't pay." But, with a sudden change of tone, he added, "How much will you give me if I make it all right?"

The prisoner, taking hope, said, "I will give you one of the tins and ten rubles."

"No, not enough," replied the official.

"Twenty-five rubles," the prisoner offered.

"All right, I will see to it," said the overseer; and, as if by magic, the tins of mutton-fat were changed to

"IN THE MARKET-PLACE ARE SEVERAL RAMSHACKLE SHELTERS." [*To face page* 386.

common swine's fat, and when the trial came on the overseer declared that "there had been a mistake. I thought that they were mutton-fat, but I suppose that I must have had a cold when I examined them the other day!"

CHAPTER XX

SAKHALIN TO VLADIVOSTOK

The Russian priest—The prisoner's hope—Sister de Mayer—Her story—Heroic efforts—Her solution of the unemployed problem—Sakhalin coal—Farewell to the island—De Castries Bay—I am to cross Manchuria as a "book-keeper."

THE Russian penal system, so far as it deals with criminals, compares, on the whole, not unfavourably with the regulations for the punishment and incarceration of delinquents adopted by other European nations. The provisions by which a prisoner may be promoted from one class to another, and gain his freedom gradually, are calculated to give hope and encourage reformation. It is the obvious failure of the administration to carry out the aim of the law, as revealed in the foregoing pages, that is so lamentable.

The reader may ask, does the Government do anything for the prisoner through the priests? No direct attempt at reform by the ministration of chaplains, as in England, is contemplated on the island, and the priests are not likely to go out of their way, even if their duties allowed it, to visit the prisoners in gaol.

The Russian priest can scarcely be compared with his English brother. The reader is familiar with the fact that the social position of the French curé and the German pastor is not that of the English clergyman. Such inferiority and social exclusion are only accentuated in the case of the Russian pope, who is, speaking generally, uneducated. History and custom have been responsible for

rendering the Russian clergy a separate class. The rural priest, excluded by his bringing up from the society of the cultured, has by his training and family been separated from the peasant class.

His position is further differentiated from that of our clergy, and his office rendered a difficult and even obnoxious one, by the manner of his remuneration. Excepting in a few cases, he is totally dependent upon fees, and this naturally results in regrettable altercations and haggling at confirmations, weddings, and burials. Scandals are created, and stories are even current of secret interments by poor peasants to evade the grasping hand of the pope. If such a system of payment engenders in too many cases greed, social functions tempt the priest to drunkenness. The temptations are many and insidious. It is not always the attraction which a feast has for a man living in poverty, but the duties of his position which lure him into intoxication. As their priest, he is expected to make himself sociable with his parishioners, and on certain occasions—at Christmas, Easter, etc.—when he goes round the village blessing each house, he would cause great offence if he did not accept a glass of vodka at each. He is called in on all popular festive occasions, and on Sakhalin when the Government or Crown bank was opened, the pope was there to inaugurate it, with the reading of a service, and the sprinkling of the walls with holy water. A feast followed, and of course the habit of drinking begun at functions does not stop with them.

When I visited Due, my interpreter took me to see the little schoolroom in which he taught his pupils, and, as we were walking up the street talking about the school, he remarked on the difficulty he had, in pursuance of his instructions, to get the children to respect their priest. "How can I do it," he said, "when they find the priest lying drunk in the gutter? Of course, their first impulse is to pelt him with stones."

All I met in my travels spoke with a contempt of the Russian pope, no less bitter than the hatred of a socialist in Paris towards the Roman Catholic priest. It is considered in Russia to be unlucky to meet a pope on first leaving home; yet it is curious that, openly as the peasants may deride and pour contempt upon him, the moment he dons his robes their attitude is at once changed, and he is their respected priest, the intercessor between them and the Power above. But it would be unfair and untrue to accept these dicta alone, and thus label all the Russian clergy. There are many excellent and saintly exceptions, and the Synod is now aiming at better discipline, and a higher standard of education. Nor should we overlook the difficulties of the rural priest, his social ostracism, his pecuniary straits, and the temptations that his office occasions him. His work is not always easy; and sometimes at the peril of his life he has to fight against the bitter cold and deep snow-drifts, in ministering to the needs of his flock.

On Sakhalin it was not to be expected that the priests would be superior to their brethren in Russia. With one exception, at Derbensk, those whom I met and heard of were scarcely a degree better than the rest of the officials, either in regard to drinking or morality. I will not attempt to repeat the stories I heard of them, but here is one concerning rectitude in financial matters which was told me by one of the chief actors in it. A prisoner of rank, who arrived on the island in 1897, was approached by the pope at ——. As a result of this interview, the prisoner, who was of an obliging temperament, and thought it well to cultivate friendly relations, went straight to Mr. Y. and asked him, as a matter of business, for a loan of 300 rubles. Now Mr. Y., knowing the family of the prisoner, was willing to do it, but, fully aware of the dangers of plunging thus early into debt, politely inquired if the loan was for his client's own use. The new arrival explained that it was a private matter, but was induced to

mention that the priest in question had asked him for an advance. Whereupon Mr. Y., while not refusing the loan, counselled his client not to oblige the pope, since he must never expect to see it back again. Explanations followed, and the true story transpired. The prisoner learned that the priest had taken 300 rubles out of the poor-box in the church, and as the annual opening of the box was impending, he had to find that sum. In the end, the pope prevailed upon some of the officials to advance him the money, for they were all in the same boat.

The Russian law insists that every official—not belonging to any of the acknowledged religions other than the Orthodox Catholic Church—shall receive the Communion once a year; but it is well known that this law is frequently obeyed in the letter rather than the spirit. With the connivance of the priest, the signature of the communicant in the book is sufficient; the Communion is not administered, but the priest gets his fee. Needless to say, this is what happened with most of the convicts, and the Government paid the fees. The only spiritual care that the inmates of the prison received from the priests was on a great feast-day, as on October 1 (O.S.), when a procession was made from the church to the prison, and there, after a few minutes' service, the prisoners were allowed to come forward and kiss the cross held up by the priest.

Not to the priests, but to a certain lady who had braved hardship and peril, did the prisoners look for help. In her a new hope had dawned upon Sakhalin, two years previous to my visit. I found her living in a wooden house giving off that unenviable spot, the market-place. It was after dark when I called, and it was always a work of some time and patience to gain an entrance anywhere after dark. A side door of the adjacent courtyard, in which a couple of savage dogs were raging to get at us, was stealthily opened, after a parleying from behind it. Then an adjournment to the other door followed, and the janitor, being satisfied as

to our amicable intentions, admitted me and Mr. X. to a large room filled with books and magazines, undergoing repair at the hands of exiles. We passed through this to the inner sanctum of Sister de Mayer. She had not yet returned, and we had leisure to glance round the simply furnished room, and enjoy for once a blazing fire, *à l'anglaise*, instead of the great closed but more effective Russian stove. Miss Eugenie de Mayer is a young lady of slight build, somewhat pale-looking, but with a face expressive of great determination and enthusiasm. The daughter of a well-known philanthropist, General de Mayer, she comes from a wealthy home, where life around her held every social attraction. It was the reading of Chekov's description of the life of convicts on Sakhalin that awoke her to the awful realities of that life, and inspired her with the longing to go and help.

In England the desire to do benevolent work has free scope, but in Russia it is by no means so; help of this kind borders dangerously on reform, and it was necessary for Miss de Mayer to proceed gradually and prudently. She had already qualified herself as nurse of the Red Cross Society, a qualification which is high in a country of such long distances, where the nurse has often to take the place of the doctor; and she took the first step towards reaching Sakhalin by joining an emigrant train as medical attendant. We can hardly conceive of the conditions into which she now plunged. A lady born and bred, she spent months attending these poor and filthy *muzhiki*, her home an empty baggage van, which had in emergency to serve as a hospital. While thus engaged, the position of matron in the Sakhalin orphan home was offered to her, and thus came the opportunity of reaching the island.

Several years previously some charitable ladies of St. Petersburg, under the highest patronage, had established a refuge and home on Sakhalin for the children of convicts born, on the road to Sakhalin, or in prison. The

management of this may have been comparatively satisfactory at first, but soon became no exception to the rest of the administration on the island; for the state of this Home in 1898 would have utterly shocked its charitable founders. The sixty inmates of both sexes, some of them by that time grown up men and women, were living indiscriminately together.

Miss de Mayer's labour was entirely voluntary, and with her unbounded enthusiasm she set to work to reorganize the institution. The difficulties she met with can scarcely be conceived; but to mention only one, the staff of teachers, who had care of the children and their morals, was composed of ex-convicts, of whom some were murderers.

This reorganization completed, and the work set going again, she was ready to follow up what had always been her chief object. This was to render aid, temporal and spiritual, to the prisoners. Their fate had weighed heavily upon her heart, and now, turning her attention towards them, she penetrated, with the consent of the Governor, into the very worst gaol, the *kandalnaya turma*, or "chained prison." Such success is a surprise to any one who knows Sakhalin and its officials, for any new schemes or attempts at reform, even of the purely benevolent kind, are looked at askance. But the Imperial Charity Society of St. Petersburg, and the Tsaritsa herself, were behind Miss de Mayer. On Sundays she was even allowed to take occasionally the Protestant service in the little wooden Lutheran church since the pastor visits the island but once a year. Meanwhile the reader, who has perused the previous chapters of this book, will realize the dangers which surrounded this heroic lady. Among the thousands of murderers at large, who are to be met in the forest, in the street, and even in one's house, Miss de Mayer moved unscathed, and many were the poor creatures helped by her, who were willing to defend her against their own kind with their lives. An incident which happened in the

summer of 1899 illustrates this, and shows of what stuff Miss de Mayer is made. A convict gang of 200, with three or four officers and several guards, was sent up to Onor, a hamlet in the interior, to erect a telegraph-line through the primeval forest southwards. In a previous chapter (XVI.) the difficulties and perils attending the making of the road as far as Onor have been described.

Notwithstanding all the obstacles and dangers of swamps and mosquitoes, Miss de Mayer, unaccompanied by any of her sex, joined these 200 convicts, nursing the sick, teaching some to read, and ministering alike to their physical and spiritual needs. One night, lying in her little tent, a mere piece of canvas with birch bark at either end, she thought she overheard voices outside, and peering out, descried two convicts. They caught sight of her, and called reassuringly, "All right, lady, we are watching to see that you come to no harm."

Heroic as her efforts were in the "chained" prison, she soon became convinced that her time and energy would be better spent in preventing the prisons being filled by recidivists, than by merely trying to raise those already there. I have dwelt at length on the difficulties of the "exile-settlers," the men who, their sentence having expired, have to earn their own living on an island where opportunities of employment are rare. Rations, it is true, are allowed them for a year, though in practice they do not always get them. In addition to those who give up the struggle as hopeless, there are, of course, hundreds who easily lapse and slide into a lawless, good-for-nothing life. Miss de Mayer recognized at once the main want, and she saw that, if only employment were forthcoming, there were a great many who would avail themselves of the opportunity of steady work to become decent citizens. The official solution of the unemployed problem was simplicity itself—to clap them into gaol. The Sister attempted a far more difficult answer to the question. Her house was promptly

turned into a factory ; and on a second visit I found not only books being sewn and bound, with a view to the establishment of a reading-room, but men squatted on the floors making brooms and sewing blouses.

More than a year previous the work had been interrupted by another and unexpected call, which deprived it of Miss de Mayer's presence for more than a year, but, fortunately, not for an indefinite period. In the summer of 1900 the eyes of Europe were turned anxiously towards the east, watching and waiting for news of the besieged legations in Peking. In Sakhalin the news of the war stirred their hearts. To Miss de Mayer came the picture of the need of sick and dying soldiers ; and she alone in the empire volunteered to go and nurse them. Russia rang with her praises, but, with her usual modesty, she was only anxious that any *éclat* she had gained should redound to the benefit of her work on Sakhalin. Having braved innumerable difficulties and dangers, and made her way across Eastern Mongolia alone, on an artillery waggon, she reached Europe only to begin working hard, lecturing, and collecting funds for the employment of ex-convicts. Many gifts in money and kind were forthcoming, from the Tsaritsa downwards, but perhaps the most appreciated and the most touching of all was the gift of forty kopyeks (10*d.*) from a poor prisoner in Samarkand. The funds collected amounted to a few hundred pounds, a totally inadequate sum to do half what was pressingly needed ; and she had reason to be only too conscious of the quick decline of interest in Russia. About a month previous to my arrival on the island Miss de Mayer had returned, according to reports, "laden with tons of gold." This was unfortunate in attracting the ne'er-do-well ; and the consequent disappointment on being offered not gold, but work, was widespread. However, "exile-settlers" began to apply in answer to her invitation, until she had eventually to turn away large numbers, many

of whom came to earn only what was necessary to keep body and soul together. At this time she was employing about 150; the women wove and dyed mats, made fishing-nets and sewed blouses, while the men made military boots and baskets. Space and funds had limited the numbers of employed, but, even so, Miss de Mayer discovered that she had to face the difficulty of over-production. The local demand for her products was soon satisfied, and she found herself with a surplus stock. On Sakhalin and the adjoining mainland, outside of the official class, there are practically no residents, and therefore the continued employment of these poor people was seriously jeopardized. Last year she therefore took the opportunity which summer gave, with its demand for out-door workers, of going over to the mainland, partly to find a market for surplus stock, and partly with another and very important object in view.

I have already mentioned that about ninety-nine out of every hundred convicts, sent to Sakhalin, fail to get away. At the end of the six years following on the termination of his sentence the "exile settler" becomes a "peasant," with the right to go to the mainland. In certain instances the Chief of his district may even allow him to go earlier; but in either case the great difficulty to be overcome is the obtaining of sufficient funds, or the personal interest of a Siberian employer who will make a definite offer of employment. Miss de Mayer saw that the influence of the prison island was baneful, even upon those who had the "rights of motion;" and with the transference to the mainland new scenes and surroundings might bring hope. One of her objects, therefore, in journeying to Nikolaevsk was to establish there a labour bureau, and she hoped that, by supplying it with a careful selection of men, the employers in Eastern Siberia and Manchuria, would be induced to engage these ex-convicts from Sakhalin. At first the attitude of the officials on the island towards Miss

de Mayer's work and plans was purely objective, they neither helped nor interfered, but perhaps the influence of the Tsaritsa, or let us hope, the truly wonderful improvement in the exiles, who came under the Sister's influence, has produced a marked alteration in the officials' behaviour. The change in the conduct of these ex-convicts has been very remarkable. Men who were brutes, murdering for the sake of a few kopyeks, whom nothing, not even the lash, could subdue, gather on holidays in the Sister's room to listen to the singing, recitation, the gramophone, and to watch the magic-lantern slides, which friends in Russia have now sent to them. They have quickly learned to respect the law of kindness, and now there is neither excess nor rowdyism.

"The Society for the Care of Convict-exiles' Families" has showed its appreciation of Miss de Mayer's work by a loan and a contribution to the work. There is crying need for an extension of premises and for an increase of the allotments of land. The foundress hopes, as the establishment grows, to be able to dispose of surplus production in Europe. To me, Miss de Mayer's arrival on the island seems the greatest and most hopeful event in the history of convict life there, and it would be a great pity if her efforts should fail or be limited by want of funds.

I was glad not to have left the island without the knowledge of this one ray of hope for the poor prisoners. My departure was now drawing nigh, for on the receipt of the belated reply-telegram I once more found myself in possession of funds, and in a position to consider how and when I could get away from Sakhalin. It was late in the season for navigation; but there remained one more mail-boat due to call, and if for any reason it failed, I could fall back upon the convict ship the *Yaroslav*. Waiting thus on possibilities, I was aroused at five o'clock one morning with the news that a cargo vessel was standing in, and now

came my opportunity. A second messenger followed in half an hour bringing news that the *Tsitsikar* was only going on to the coal mines at Vladimirsk, twenty versts to the north, and that the weather being clear, there was no immediate likelihood of her having to take refuge over in De Castries Bay. This gave me time to make necessary arrangements, for the vagaries of vessels off the coast of Sakhalin were such that it was well to be prepared. In fact, by evening a light breeze had sprung up, and fearing lest the steamer should bolt over to the mainland, without calling at Alexandrovsk, I boarded one of the two little steam-tugs and made my way along the coast to join her at the mines.

Coal is found at several places along the western coast, but is chiefly worked at Due and Vladimirsk. I have even seen a seam of brown coal in an exposure on the river Tim. The coal worked is a good lignite, on the whole superior to Japanese as a steam coal, and commands a higher price. Were it not for the poverty of the lading arrangements, and the consequent uncertainty of the fulfilment of contracts, it would be better known and in greater request. There have always been conflicting estimates of its probable extent, but it would appear that the authorities are now optimistic. A scheme which has been floating in the air for years—the building of a mole from Jonquière Head to the rocks called "The Three Brothers," so as to afford shelter for shipping, and the laying down of a railroad between Vladimirsk, Alexandrovsk, and Mikhailovsk—was revived in earnest last year, and contracts placed for timber. This would render the process of loading simple, regular and dependable.

The present means of lading are absurdly inadequate. The rate of working is ludicrously slow. Twenty-five tons had been shot into the bunks of the *Tsitsikar* in one day, and I counted more than that number of convicts at work. Only one lighter was available, the others had been driven

on shore by bad weather. The most unsatisfactory feature about it is the fickleness of the weather and the absence of safe anchorage. The drawbacks of the present system were fully exemplified in the case of the *Tsitsikar*. This vessel, which was one of the fleet of the "Chinese Eastern (Manchurian) Railway and Steam Shipping Company," had been three weeks attempting to get two thousand tons on board, and had so far succeeded in taking on one hundred and fifty only.

There was no difficulty about the mining. The convicts simply approached the coal on the level and tunnelled into it. Vladimirsk was like a rabbit warren. As soon as the coal became poor, that particular spot was abandoned and another chosen. The coal sells to merchants at about six rubles a ton, and the convicts engaged in the mines (and only these) get 10 per cent. of the value of their output.

Clambering on board the *Tsitsikar* I found the captain, who, with a surprised look, asked—

"Are you a passenger?"

"Yes."

"Where do you want to go?"

"To Vladivostok."

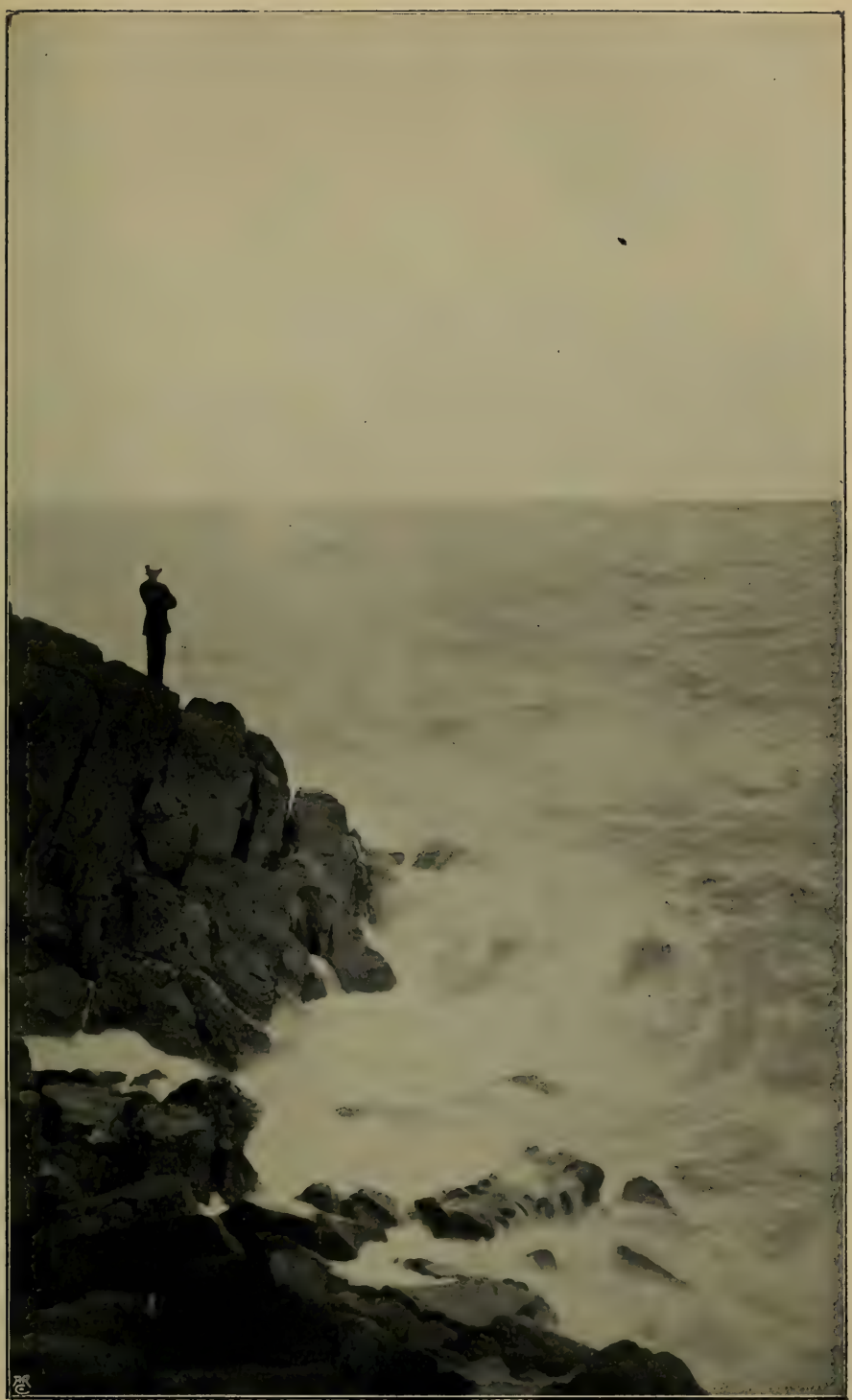
"Well, I don't know where I'm going." To further inquiries he replied, "I shall cross over to De Castries, and there I may find a telegram ordering me to Nagasaki, Port Arthur, or Shanghai. You see I have no cargo, I have not been able to load up with coal, so there is no reason for me to go to Vladivostok."

This was unexpected; but I decided to venture. The next morning another attempt was made to get a little more coal on board. Again the dirty ill-clad figures were at work, with only a drill shirt and trousers and top-boots in the cold raw morning air of an October day at sea; and I wondered, as I watched them, if these had gambled away their warm clothes. The wind had begun by blowing from

the east, and, as the captain prophesied, worked round to a fair south-westerly breeze culminating in a strong north-westerly. It was soon too much for the lighter, and threatened to be dangerous for us. The barge was loosed, an official came on and counted off the convicts, on whom a very sharp look had been kept ; the anchor was weighed, and I bade farewell to Sakhalin. How enviable was my lot compared with that of the twenty and odd thousand condemned ones whose hearts ever went out in longing for the homeland, and who must live and die on this lonely prison island. True, the majority of them had sinned, and done evil in the sight of God and their fellow-men ; but one could not restrain one's pity for the hopelessness of their present situation ; and for those whose offence had been light, it was cruel that they should be condemned to a life-long banishment in such a degrading atmosphere.

As I have said before, the administration is answerable for the majority of ills on Sakhalin. The system would be bettered by the provision for a more careful classification of the prisoners, and it is quite evident that the penalty of death should be extended to the murderer of a civilian, as well as an official on Sakhalin. Only by such means can the security of the law-abiding inhabitant be ensured. But the crying fault is the failure of the officials, their slackness and arbitrariness, their open immorality and peculation. Making all allowance for the demoralizing atmosphere of the criminal population among whom their duty places them, the state of things I have so meagrely sketched is a terrible indictment.

Closer and more regular inspection from headquarters is needed ; but above and before all, the appointment of a strong, firm, but benevolent governor is desirable. He must be strong enough to fear no cavilling reports from his underlings, and must have power to dismiss and reform without regard to the prescriptive right of long-standing, evil-doing officials of the Patrin stamp. There are a few



FAREWELL TO SAKHALIN. [*To face page* 400.

well-intentioned, kindly men among them, but they are not strong; and the network woven by the arbitrary, peculating, and immoral type is almost impossible to break through.

The morning after my departure saw the *Tsitsikar* standing in for De Castries Bay. It is a well-sheltered harbour, with a depth at entrance of fifty feet, diminishing to thirty feet off Observatory Island, a bold islet so named by La Pérouse, because his officers set up their instruments on it, after a long interval, to determine their exact position. To the south of this is a small islet called Oyster Island, and to the north-east is Basalt Island. Near the southern head stands up on the promontory of Kloster Kamp a fine lighthouse, then about to be deserted by the pilots with the cessation of navigation. On the north-western shore of the bay, at the mouth of the river Somon, is *Alexandrovsk post*, consisting of a telegraph-office, with the houses of the Chief and his assistants, and a tiny church and barracks for the small company of soldiers stationed there. To the north and south stretch forests, uninhabited save by a few roaming Oroktis. Around the bay the hills rise to a height of 1100 and even to 1540 feet, thickly clothed with trees, save where the tell-tale brown slopes witnessed to fires carelessly lighted by the Russians. It is a lonely spot at any time, and especially in winter. Cut off by ice from all navigation, it is only accessible to the post by dog-sledges from the river Amur, which is itself served by relays of horse-sledges from distant parts. Only in one respect was it at that time better off than Alexandrovsk; the telegraph-wire connecting it with Vladivostok was intact. In this secluded spot the Chinese Eastern Railway and Steam Shipping Company had just stationed an agent. What he could be doing in winter I do not know; but if his wish was to be "far from the madding crowd," he could scarcely have chosen a better place. His log-house was perched on the cliffs on the south side of the river, about three miles distant from the "post." Below was

a tiny wharf, where a store of coal was supposed to be kept for the fleet.

To my disappointment, a telegram had been received ordering the *Tsitsikar* to return to Sakhalin with the mail, and I felt that if we began this trotting to and fro, there would be no certainty as to when it would end. I had also received *official* notice that the Manchurian Railway would be opened on the following Saturday. I may say here that, so far from this being correct, through passenger traffic has only been announced this year. As I was most anxious to reach England by Christmas, and as time was short, I determined to do what I could to prevent the return to the island. I therefore represented to the agent that the antiquated gunboat, the *Tungus*, which had already wasted so much time in trying to mend the cable, lay in the harbour; and that the Governor of Sakhalin himself had requested the Governor-general to allow him to use that vessel for the transport of telegrams between the mainland and the island, and therefore it might just as well take the mails. Meanwhile, in either case, they had to be fetched from the shore. The captain was remaining with the agent to talk over his instructions, and the chief mate, the only other person who talked enough English to be understood by the Chinese crew, was in charge of the vessel; I was, therefore, asked to take a boat with the Chinese bo'sun and two of the crew to the shore. It was two to three miles distant, and all the directions for landing that I could get from the chief mate were that I should see a cliff-ladder on nearing the shore. It seemed odd that I, who was regarded as a military spy, should now be sent to fetch the Russian mails. But my functions, I found, were to be confined to coxing the boat and acting as interpreter between the bo'sun and the telegraph Chief. This was done by means of pidgin English, some Russian, and a little German. By good luck I sighted the rude steps cut in the cliff, and leaving one of our crew in charge

of the boat, we clambered up the cliff, and passing by the church reached the post-office. A little way to the north-east of this is a mound, with a cannon-ball on it, said to commemorate the unsuccessful attempt of the English and French during the Crimean War. In the post-office we found the old postmaster, to whom I explained our mission. Considering that we were not exactly on the hub of the universe, and that letters did not pour in every few minutes, but trickled in at intervals sometimes of weeks, the delay in finishing off that mail could hardly be due to anxiety to include the latest arrivals. Two hours elapsed before all was ready, during which the old postmaster, who had lived here seventeen years, waxed quite friendly; charts and maps were produced, and possible changes in the contour of the land discussed.

As I made my way back to the boat, I came upon an outflow of lava, as might be expected in its proximity to Basalt Island, but interesting in view of its hitherto undiscovered occurrence on Sakhalin. That this is not an isolated flow, or exposure, is evident from the legend of the Oroktis. They say that once upon a time there were three suns in the sky. It was so hot then that men lived in the water; but one day a man determined to shoot these suns, and, hiding in a hole, he managed to hit two of them, which, falling into the water, hissed and spluttered out, and thereafter the earth cooled. The "porous," or "sponge," stones still found are relics of these times.

On boarding the *Tsitsikar*, I found to my relief that my suggestion had been adopted, and that the mails were to be transferred to the *Tungus*. The best news of all was that our vessel was ordered to call at Vladivostok. The distance to be covered was about 720 knots, and we hugged the coast for most of the way, giving it a respectable berth at night, for the chart, though dated 1900 and based on an English one, expressed itself uncertain to the extent of nine miles as to the position of the coast-line. For 120

miles portions of the contour of Sakhalin were visible in the east. To the west the coast of the mainland rose bold and high, and inland stretched, seemingly, illimitable forests. For long distances the coast-line is rugged and white, exposing a hard limestone, and behind range deeply-furrowed mountains, jagged and steep, running north-west and south-east. This is the Sikhota Alin range. On the map several settlements are marked, but scarcely any exist besides the little one at Emperor's Bay, a beautiful bight where the level of the land begins to be lower. The Chinese are engaged in summer in fishing, the gathering of trepang or bêche de mer (*holothurea*)—an edible sea-worm and table delicacy—and seaweed; but since 1901, I believe, a prohibition against other than Russian subjects has hit them hard. Our voyage began with bright sunshiny weather, and in latitude 51° north the crew were mopping the decks, but six degrees nearer the equator, in latitude 45°, they were using marline-spikes to break up the ice—such was the effect of a northerly wind in these parts. Our captain was from the Baltic provinces, and, like all I have met with from that part of Russia, was ready to freely criticize the Government and all things Russian. It was not to be expected that the chief engineer should escape his remarks. "In these days any man who professed a knowledge of nuts and screws could become a ship's engineer. What was the result? Here was a good ship, built in England only six years ago, and it was being spoiled already." I began to think there was something more than jealousy in these words, when twice in one day we broke down. The feeding-pump refused to work, sails were unfurled, and we began to look forward to an extended voyage in the Straits of Tartary. Progress was very slow, but on the evening of the sixth day the *Tsitsikar* entered the Golden Horn. It was 9 p.m., and as we approached a great light on our starboard, a voice rang out through the darkness, "What ho! Steamer there!" It was a reminder that vessels are not

allowed to enter Vladivostok harbour between sunset and sunrise.

According to the information sent to the agent on Sakhalin, the Manchurian Railway was to be officially opened on the following day, and as that day was Sunday, and the day after that a holiday—how many "holy days" there are in Russia!—I was anxious to make all arrangements before the two feast-days intervened. It was customary to wait for the visit of the police on board, but, leaving my goods and chattels scattered about, I slipped ashore to see the kindly American Consul, the railway agent, and to visit the Russo-Chinese Bank, etc. The same motley group of Chinese, Japanese, Manchus, Koreans, gipsies, Golds, etc., was moving in kaleidoscopic fashion in the *bazar*, as I stepped from the sampan. The only difference since my last visit was that many of them had donned winter costume, and were thickly girt about in wadded cotton, and the Manchus and the Chinese from Chifu crowned in martial-looking felt caps, with three lappets adorned with balls of long fur.

I was soon disillusioned as to the opening of the Chinese Eastern or Manchurian Railway. It was neither officially opened nor even completed. There had been a gap in the railroad of as much as 200 versts, but this it was hoped would be bridged in the course of a day or two. As to my getting through before the line was thrown open, all Englishmen I well knew were refused, not point-blank, but with that polite but oft-repeated reference to another authority, which turns out to be an interminable process. I had already met an English colonel who had been turned back, and whose later movements had been shadowed. I began by putting a bold face upon it, and asking the engineer who dispensed passes for permission to travel, but he referred me to the Governor. In another quarter, I was strongly dissuaded from interviewing the latter, who, I was informed, would not or could not give

me permission; and by making my intention public, I might defeat my object should I try some other method.

In this state of things there seemed but one course to be adopted, that advised by an old traveller. This was to take the train as far as the frontier between the Primorsk and Manchuria, to descend there, hire a *telyega* and drive across the boundary, then pick up the train wherever I might, trusting to tips to the conductor to pass me through. In the course of the day, while still seeking information, I happened upon a merchant who, I learned, was meditating going up as far as Kharbin. With great kindness he agreed to do what he could to get me included in his pass as his book-keeper. Through the medium of a friend of the engineer this was accomplished, and in three or four days I looked forward to starting. This interval was passed pleasantly in visits to the museum, and to those who were in office there, of whom, as is usual, several were men who had been exiled for "having been overheard thinking."

On November 7 my merchant "employer" and I presented ourselves at the station, he to reach Kharbin, 491 miles distant, I bound for London, over 7000 miles away. To do this it was necessary first to reach the frontier of the Primorsk, then to cross Manchuria, next to take the branch-line of the Trans-Baikalian Railway, and afterwards the main line to Lake Baikal. The lake crossed, three and a half hours' journey would bring me to Irkutsk, where I should be within eight days of Moscow. From Vladivostok to St. Petersburg by this route is a distance of 5680 miles, and now this journey may be accomplished in sixteen days. But in November, 1901, it took nearly this time (fifteen days) to cross Manchuria itself, which is but a sixth part of the journey; and I had been told that Manchuria would be traversed in about six days, but this was not the only surprise in railway travel that awaited me.

CHAPTER XXI

ACROSS MANCHURIA

A brief historic sketch—Area and resources—Railway route—Scenery—Journey in a construction train—Kharbin—Difficulty of finding the train—The steppe—Approaching Tsitsikar—A poor railroad.

THE advance of Russia into Manchuria has focused the attention of the student of politics in the far East upon that country. It is a land whose history would be difficult to write, its early story being merged in the obscurity of unrecorded wanderings of wild tribes. A stray reference or two in the many tomed annals of the Chinese Empire but lifts the curtain to drop it again and plunge us into darkness.

The present interest displayed in Manchuria, and the absence of any history of the country, must be my excuse for stopping at this point of the narrative of my journey to sketch in faintest outline what we know of its story.

There seems no doubt that the present reigning (Manchu) dynasty of China is descended from the people called Nü-ch'ih. The Nü-ch'ih (or Nü-chen) in their turn were descendants of the Suh-shen,* who are mentioned as having brought "tribute of a famous description of arrow in the year 1103 B.C." to the Chinese Court. For the next 2000 years there is mention of an intermediate race in the same genealogical line, the Yih-lou, who are described as "a kind of Troglodytes" (200 A.D.), who

* Nü is considered to be a modification of Suh.

smeared their bodies with fat in winter, and whose dwellings were "compared to grave mounds," with the entrance at the summit (500 A.D.).*

But by the eleventh century the civilization of the neighbouring Chinese Empire had made itself felt, and already a section of the Nü-chens were known by the term Civilized Nü-chens, as distinct from the "Wild Nü-chens who had retreated beyond the Sahalien (Amur) river."

Near neighbours, of the same Tungus stock,† the Si-tans or Khitans had in the middle of the tenth century gained considerable power, and spread their dominion over Liao-Tung, and what is now the northern part of China, including the provinces of Chi-li and Shen-si. This expansion at the expense of the great southern power brought on war. China, then ruled by the Sung dynasty, called in the aid of the Nü-chens, who, under an able leader, Akuta, proved victorious over the Khitans. This general took the title of Emperor of the Kin (gold) Tartars (1115 A.D.), and a quarrel ensuing with his allies, he carried the war into their country, and not only conquered the provinces of Chi-li and Shen-si, but for a long time held Honan. It is clear that the Nü-chens had made great strides in military organization; though, unlike their neighbours the Khitans, who had in the tenth century adopted a written character for their language, their chiefs still issued orders by the old device of an arrow with a notch in it, while matters of urgency were distinguished by three notches. However, with the establishment of the Kin dynasty, rapid advance was made, and written characters were invented, and during their short era of dominion we read of the establishment of a Board of History.

A new and terrible enemy now arrived on the scene, who threatened not only the Powers of the East, but even those of the West, and advanced into Europe. The

* *Et seq.* A. Wylie's "Chinese Researches."

† *Trans. of the Asiatic Soc. of Japan*, vol. xviii. E. H. Parker.

Mongols, under Chinghis Khan, swept down upon China and its neighbours. Space will not allow me to detail the events which brought about the overthrow of the Nü-chens, but their fall was so absolute that they now receded into the northern portions of the present Manchuria, and gradually declined into their old ways of living.

In 1586, a Chinese author, Wang-K'e, in the supplement* to the "Antiquarian Researches,"† describes the country in question in his time as occupied by the Wild Nü-ch'ihs, who follow the hunt, and breed horses, and live in portable tents much like the Mongol nomads to-day. Some of the tribes, "3000 li distant from Nu-wih-kan," figure their faces and fasten up their hair in a knot, etc., and generally appear to resemble the Golds of the Amur to-day.

The Nü-chens, fallen back into their old state, were only kept under, and their predatory excursions checked, by strong military arrangements on the marches. 'Such was the state of matters about 1580, when a man above the ordinary stamp appeared on the arena,' in the person of Nurhachu, afterwards known as T'ai-tsu. Born in the present Manchu province of Fêng-t'ien, of an obscure family, his military skill, undaunted courage and perseverance united the tribes south of the Sahalien river. Troubles soon arose with the Ming dynasty in China, and in 1618 he published his grievances against that power, and made an attack which was crowned with victory. In 1626 he died, but his son, following up his father's conquests, was proclaimed emperor, though his son, the grandson of Nurhachu, who ascended the throne in 1644, is regarded as the first of the Ts'ing or Manchu dynasty. The latter name was that of the tribe to which the family belonged.

* The "Sŭh-wan-tëen-t'ung-k'aou." 254 vols. A. Wylie, *op. cit.*

† The "Wăn-hĕĕn-t'ung-K'aou." By Ma Twan-lin. 348 vols. A. Wylie, *op. cit.*

During the reign of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), most of what is called to-day the Fêng-t'ien or southern province of Manchuria had remained under Chinese jurisdiction, and large numbers of Chinese had settled here; in fact, it is said that the greater part of the present population (17,000,000) of Manchuria are descendants of these. Since the accession of the present, Ts'ing, dynasty Chinese convicts have been despatched into Manchuria, and many escaping have turned to the more lucrative profession of brigandage. To them Russian policy to-day owes a debt of gratitude; for should the political considerations of deep-laid schemes demand concentration of troops, then it is only necessary to spread rumours of the rising of the Khunhus brigands to allay the suspicions of other Powers. Latterly, the immigration of the Chinese agricultural labourer has been the great feature, a movement encouraged by the authorities in face of the threatened advance of Russia.

The first definite step towards the Russian advance into Manchuria was made in 1858, when the Treaty of Aigun gave Russia the right of navigation of the Sungari river. "Scientific" expeditions had previously voyaged up the great river, and though the annexation of the country was not within practical politics, and was left to the "future and Providence," these were no doubt the thin end of the wedge.

The rest is recent history. The idea became a definite plan with the signing of the agreement between the Russo-Chinese Bank and the Chinese Government in 1896, sanctioning the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

The area that to-day bears the name of Manchuria is bounded on the north by the Amur river; on the west by the river Argun, Mongolia, and a part of the Chi-li province; on the south by the Pechi-li Gulf and Yellow Sea; and on the east by Korea and the Ussuri

river.* Its seaboard is therefore confined to the southern province, and chiefly to the Liao-tung peninsula, the eastern coast between the river Tumen and the mouth of the Amur having been ceded to Russia in 1860.

The three provinces, the northern, central, and southern, are respectively named Heh-lung-kiang,† Kirin, and Fêng-t'ien or Shing-king.

The southern province, including the Liao-tung peninsula, at the end of which lies Port Arthur, is the richest, the best developed, and the most populous of the three. In area it is only one-sixth of the whole, and rejoices in about the same square mileage as England and Wales, while, roughly speaking, the central and northern provinces are respectively double and treble that area.

Minerals are found in all three, the coal at present obtained in Fêng-t'ien being in great demand, and far superior to that from Kirin. The gold washings in Heh-lung-kiang, on the tributaries of the Amur, have been so far the most valuable, but it is possible that Fêng-t'ien may yet rival it. The silk industry is confined to the latter province, and the skin and fur trade is of least importance in it, and of most in Heh-lung-kiang.

The hills and mountains are thickly covered with timber, especially in the central and northern provinces, and there is considerable traffic from the former down the Yalu river.

Agriculture is naturally more advanced in Kirin and Fêng-t'ien, though there are still large areas not yet appropriated. In Heh-lung-kiang it is only in the richer valleys that cultivation exists. Considerable areas of the

* For the exact boundaries, with the divisions of the provinces, the reader is referred to the map at the end of the book.

† This is the Chinese name for the Amur river. *Heh* means black, *lung*, dragon, and *kiang*, river; the Chinese therefore call the Black (*Sahalien*) river of the Manchus the Black Dragon river. The dragon's presence remains unexplained.

last are of the nature of pure steppe, *i.e.* sandy, saliferous soil, from which soda is extracted and transported in brick form to China proper. This is the nature of the south-west portion of Heh-lung-kiang, which is chiefly occupied by Mongols, whose wandering herds find there scanty pasture.

Of all the rivers which bound or flow through Manchuria, the Argun, the Sungari (with its important tributary the Nonni), and the Ussuri discharge their waters into the Amur in the north, and thus find outlet in the wrong direction for the great trade of the south ; while it is the smaller rivers, the Tumen, the Yalu, and the Liao, which trend in this direction.

The river Nonni, rising in the Great Hsinghan or Khingan mountains, which lie east of that portion of the Argun river between lake Dalai Nor and its junction with the Shilka, flows south to meet the Sungari coming from the central province south of Kirin. From their confluence these rivers, now called the Sungari, flow in a north-easterly direction, joining the river Amur about 160 miles above Khabarovsk. The Sungari, like the Amur, is navigable for a great distance, even as far as Kirin, where Mr. Hosie * speaks of having seen steamboats. At Kharbin, where I crossed it, the river was half a mile wide.

The traveller, crossing Manchuria by railway from Vladivostok, passes through only the central and northern provinces, whereas the line from Port Arthur traverses all three, joining the Vladivostok branch at Kharbin, on the river Sungari. The latter line passes near Mukden, the capital of Fêng-t'ien, and the former not far from Ninguta, but leaves Kirin, the capital of the province of that name, quite away on the upper Sungari. From Kharbin the joint-line crosses the Sungari into Heh-lung-Kiang, and runs within sixteen miles of the capital Tsitsikar, on the Nonni, and ends within that province a few miles north-west of lake Dalai Nor.

* *Op. cit.*

INHABITANTS OF KIRIN, MANCHURIA.

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From Vladivostok to Manchuria station, which is the terminus, near the Siberian border, is a distance of 1071½ miles. From Port Arthur it is 124 miles longer. The actual Chinese Eastern or Manchurian line (excluding the Kharbin to Port Arthur section), is 943½ miles long, for from Vladivostok to Grodekov, 128 miles, the railroad is a branch of the Ussuri Railway, and traverses Russian territory.

From Manchuria station, twelve miles south of the Siberian frontier, a loop-line of the Trans-Baikalian Railway, reputed to have been in working for two years, could be depended upon for connecting with the main line, which would land the traveller in a definite time, if of several days, at Irkutsk.

The duration of the journey from Vladivostok to Manchuria station was a matter of guess-work, but I was assured that I might reckon on the 1071½ miles being covered in about six days. Some still declared that there remained nearly 200 versts of the railroad unfinished, while others maintained that these had been linked up. I was advised not to take provisions, since they could be obtained at buffets or wayside cottages. As for the condition of the line, reports were not so rosy, a Russian Commodore, with whom I discussed the condition of the railway on the night before I left Vladivostok, criticized the construction very severely, declaring that the engineers had repeated the mistake made on the Siberian railway, of laying the road in the valleys and of exposing it to the spring floods. If any confirmation of this were needed, is is supplied by the washing away of large portions of the line this summer (1903), compelling passengers for Peking to make great detours. He asked if I had heard of the collision near Kharbin, in which three were killed and forty injured; or of one since, in which a train descending the zigzag before the station Duzinza, had toppled over and killed two of the passengers. We saw traces of these later on in

the shape of smashed trucks and an overturned engine, but we reaped the benefit of these accidents in more prudent driving. As far as Nikolskoy (sixty-eight miles) we were still on the Ussuri Railway, and the accommodation was excellent, though the train was uncomfortably crowded. Owing to the gradients up the valley of the Suifun, the pace often dropped to six miles an hour, but we accomplished the distance in fair time. As far as Nikolskoy the outlook was of great rolling hills, river-worn levels and forests much thinned by clearing. The country now wore a very brown look, reminding one of the environs of Adelaide at the end of summer. At Nikolskoy our route diverged, and we followed the branch-line of the Ussuri—the main line of which runs north to Khabarovsk—as far as Grodekov (sixty miles), named after the present Governor-general of the Pri-Amursky *oblast.* From this point the hills melted away into the great bare plains, but darkness shut out our view ere we reached Grodekov. Here we bundled out and took our farewell of a railway with scheduled times and ordinary trains. Henceforth we must be at the mercy of our engine-driver, of agents stationed at lonely spots on the way, and also of gangs of Chinese coolies completing or repairing the line. An hour later a train drew up at the station, consisting of a number of trucks laden with merchandise and Chinese ; five horse brakes, in one of which was a military doctor camping out and other officers lying around on shelves and boxes ; and one Russian fourth-class carriage, labelled third-class here, into which we fought our way. My gun, bows and arrows, and spears, Gilyak and Orochon clothing and other articles for the musems I wished further ; and even bedding, which ought to have proved useful, could not be utilized for want of space. The carriage was about half the length of an ordinary English carriage, arranged but not divided into two compartments, giving seating room on the bare benches for about fifteen. As we had a varying number from

eighteen to twenty-four, and baggage occupied considerable space, the passengers were accommodated with some difficulty. My merchant friend and myself managed to occupy seats, or rather to squat upon the top of our baggage on the seats, while one man slept on our bundles between the benches, and others were huddled up or scattered about upon the floor. In vain we tried to sleep. It is astonishing how inconvenient it is to possess a head under such circumstances. It drops to the right or left or to the front just as you are dozing off, and forces you to rouse up and pull yourself together again, and then you begin the same performance, to repeat it a dozen times ; to say nothing of other peoples' falling upon your shoulders. If only one could have unscrewed it, and put it in the rack, the difficulty would have been solved. As it was, I cast envious looks upon the snoring forms upon the floor, and a man and woman who had taken refuge in the racks. The next night was passed in a similar manner, save that one more seat was available, through the desertion of a passenger who preferred a shelf in a horse-box to a seat in our carriage ; but the prospect of this kind of "bed" continuing indefinitely was not attractive. The nights were frosty, and we mildly wondered how the Chinese, who were crowded together on trucks, managed to endure the exposure to the night cold.

The country at first presented a succession of rolling hills of no great height, their sides shorn of the forests by fire and axe ; but as we neared Kharbin the valleys narrowed, and torrent streams, which had cleaved their way through little ravines, were now silent under the hands of King Frost. In the early stages of the journey brick-built stations were passed, but later on a few log-huts lying off the line did duty. The rail was laid mostly in the valley-beds, but on this section, which has been worked for nearly a year, a permanent way was already being constructed on a higher level, and when this and the tunnels are completed the steepest

gradient, which was then 1 in 57, will be reduced to 1 in 100. Between Vladivostok and Kharbin there was no serious difficulty in obtaining food. When the regulation station buffets disappeared, an *aubergiste* was to be found catering in rough-and-ready fashion in a hut, among the collection that had grown up around a centre of railway construction. It was true that the hut had to be found, and was generally a quarter of a mile from the station, and that there was always a doubt as to when the train would start; but on the whole meals were to be had though at irregular intervals. At most of the merely wayside stations peasants or Chinese appeared, to sell boiled eggs, black bread, and bottles of milk. At a spot where the most serious accident had occurred, where we negotiated several zigzags, with their reversing stations, a tunnel was being constructed to obviate the delay and danger of these. This is just before Duzinza station, and more than halfway to Kharbin (333 miles from Vladivostok). It is to measure about 330 yards, and was being engineered by a Hungarian, with whom I travelled, who had under him gangs of Italian workmen. The distance from Vladivostok to Kharbin is 491 miles, and this was performed in seventy hours, a speed of seven miles an hour; but we had stopped one night for eight hours, since the line was not sufficiently safe to proceed in the darkness, and deducting other stoppages, we had averaged about nine and a half miles per hour while going.

Kharbin was reached at seven in the morning of the fourth day. No station had yet been built, and we descended just where the train had stopped, though nobody else appeared to be getting out. Opening a window I pitched the baggage out to the merchant standing below, and finding a couple of Chinamen, with a team, we chartered them to transport our baggage to the hotel. The Chinamen's *atelage* was distinctly novel, the cart resembling certain brewers' vehicles that have a ladder-like frame on

two wheels, and in the shafts was a Mongolian pony, and in the front of it three abreast. Later on I saw other "tandems" with seven horses, three in front followed by three and one in the shafts. My "employer," who had exacted nothing more in the shape of services than conversation, knowing the ropes, led us to a long, dingy-looking, wooden building, which he announced to be the hotel. After trying by all known methods of knocking to arouse the inmates, we took our way round to the back, where we succeeded in gaining entrance to the yard, in the middle of which was a big kennel and a bear tied up by a rope. Further efforts on our part were rewarded by the appearance of a factotum, disturbed from his slumbers, who announced that the "hotel" was full. Notwithstanding this discouraging statement, he managed to find us a room, the like of which, however, I do not wish to inhabit again. It was filthy, and without further accommodation than a bedstead with a mattress, the broken springs of which were poking through the dirty covering; and one or two chairs. It was as well that we were expected to supply our own bedding. A second bed they declared was not to be had, but before evening a couch, which was also suffering from broken "ribs," was begged, borrowed, or stolen. Washing was regarded as a luxury, and a basin of water, or I should say *the* basin, was brought only on ringing for it, and taken away before one had finished, for some one else's use. In the room in which we ate our meals was one of those showy-looking automatic musical instruments—the name of which I do not know, nor do I wish to—made in Germany. Nevertheless, I was indebted to it for the curious sensation of hearing selections from the "Mikado" and the "Washington Post" in the heart of Manchuria.

Kharbin is practically a Russian creation; the older place lies about four and a half miles from New Kharbin, on the river Sungari, after which it is called. New Kharbin, where I was staying, was an uninteresting collection of

barrack-looking buildings of one story, built of brick and thatch. The Russian portion of Old Kharbin, which lies between New Kharbin and Sungari, presents the appearance of a new building estate, and if any doubt exists in the mind of any one as to the intentions of the Russians in Manchuria, it would be dispelled at once on a visit to Old Kharbin. Outside of Vladivostok it is an exception in Siberia to come across many buildings of brick or stone, and even in Irkutsk, the so-called Paris of Siberia, seven-eighths of the erections are of wood. These solid red-brick buildings of Kharbin, the detached houses of the officials, and the many public erections, had a special significance in view of Russia's repeated promises to evacuate Manchuria.

Kharbin lies on a plain, and, notwithstanding that it was only November 10, and we were wrapped in furs, we suffered much from the cold in driving to Sungari. The wind was terribly bitter, and our *izvostchik*, with his collar turned up over his ears, sat sideways on his perch. Out-of-door *café* resorts, however, looking very brown and tawdry now, testified to the equally great heat of summer. Sungari itself we found to be quite the business city. In summer there is, and—notwithstanding the construction of the railway—should be in future, considerable traffic on the river. The fleet of the Sungari Steam Shipping Company had played an important *rôle* during the outbreak of Chinese in Manchuria the year before. Prince M. Khilkov, who had been stationed here for four years, said that their settlement had had a very narrow escape. I give the story as he told it me. The reports of the campaign in Manchuria were so exaggerated that it was impossible to know whom to believe, but this much is true, that the repression of the rising was not attended in the south and centre with the atrocities committed in the north.

When the alarm was given Russian settlers, railway workmen, and their families, had fled in all directions, but mainly to Kharbin, where they had been put on board

the Sungari steamers and taken to Khabarovsk. On July 2, 1900, the Chinese troops appeared before Kharbin. Fortunately for the defenders, the last two or three days of their march had been rainy, and their guns had lagged behind. This caused two or three days' delay, and when they arrived the omens were discovered to be unfavourable, and again several days elapsed before the auspicious day came round. The delay was precious to the Russians, who, on July 2, had but sixty rifles, and enabled them by the 13th, when the attack commenced, to reckon on no less than 6000. A successful sortie was made, in which three of the Chinese Krupp guns were captured and turned on them ; thus any immediate danger was averted, although twenty-five days elapsed before communications could be established with the outer world.

I had gone to Prince Khilkov, who is the nephew of the Minister of Public Works and Railways, to openly ask for a pass through to Siberia. My merchant "employer" was going no further, and, as I was nearly halfway through Manchuria, I guessed the authorities would be comparatively indifferent as to whether they sent me forward or back, since the fact that I had already crossed the frontier relieved them of much responsibility. Perhaps it was fortunate that Colonel Ugovich, the controlling engineer, commonly known as the "King of Manchuria," was engaged with the Governor-general in touring the country. At any rate, after some hesitation, and at the end of three interviews with the prince, who was acting as secretary to Colonel Ugovich, he politely handed me a pass, wrote upon it the usual courteous request to officials to assist me, and gave me a letter to the superintendent at what was called Sungari station. Thirty-six hours after our arrival at Kharbin I was ready to start on the remainder of the journey through Manchuria, a distance of 580½ miles.

I now regretfully took leave of my merchant friend. He

was anything but well; we had both caught severe chills before setting out from Vladivostok, and the cold, the exposure, want of sleep, and precarious meals, had so affected him that he went back to Vladivostok to be confined to his room for two or three months.

From this point I had not estimated the difficulties that lay before me, although I did not expect simply to order a cab, drive to the station, purchase a ticket, and appropriate a comfortable *coupé*. The first problem was to find the station, or the site of the potential station. The train, I was informed, would start, not from the spot at which I had left it, but about six or seven miles further on, over on the other side of the Sungari river. It was said to be leaving about nine o'clock that night. When I ultimately reached it, I learnt that it was the same train that I had come by, plus another from Port Arthur, and that it had conveniently, though not intentionally, awaited my departure. I had engaged two *izvostchiki*, the *proletka* in front containing all my baggage, and the latter my own person. It had been carefully explained to them where I wanted to go, and they had made profuse assurances that they grasped the situation; but I might have known what was coming, for it is common experience all over the eastern world. We had gone but three-quarters of the way, across a wide, sweeping, empty plain, when they pulled up. Now they were ex-convicts, and I knew that I had to take a firm attitude, so I scolded them for having said they knew exactly where I wanted to go, and yet now, having come thus far, asked, "Where does the *barin* wish to go?" I repeated that I was bound for the Sungari railway-station, on the other side of the river, where I wished to see Mr. Svollensky, the *nachalnik*. They shook their heads, talked together, and drove off, whither I knew not, except that it was not in the right direction. However, to my relief we were going through the town of Sungari, and though I was anxious about the time, I felt that at least something was going to happen. Suddenly the

izvostchiki turned down a lane which led to the river, and drew up in front of a large wooden building standing in a clump of trees.

A man was passing on the road, and, hoping to find him more intelligent than my drivers, I accosted him and explained the situation, whereupon he exonerated them from blame, declaring that the bridge did not permit of horse traffic, so that the vehicles could not cross to the other side of the river. For the moment I was nonplussed. My drivers wanted to take me somewhere—I don't know where—but seeing that the building, in front of which we were, was the office of the Sungari Steam Shipping Company, I ventured to make inquiries there. Entering, I found, to my surprise, an office lighted by electric light, and at least half a dozen clerks busily poring over ledgers. Addressing one of the elder ones, I asked, in Russian, "Is there anybody here who speaks French, German, or English?" but receiving a reply in the negative, I fell back upon what Russian I could command A pleasant-looking, rather more important, official entering at the moment, I explained that I was bound for Manchuria station, when he interrupted me with, "I am also going to Manchuria station; in fact, to St. Petersburg. My *drozhky* is outside. I am starting at once." It was of a piece with all my good fortune, for the difficulties of that evening, had I not had his guidance, would have only just commenced. We drove for a mile or two along the river, climbing over steep embankments, up which our horses seemed to go like flies on a wall, and then were turned out in the cold on the brink of the river at the foot of a still greater embankment. The Sungari here is 400 *sazheni* (2800 feet), or more than half a mile wide. As the bridge was not yet safe for trains, the passengers had to walk across on the ice. A group of jabbering Chinese coolies gathered round us, whom my new acquaintance engaged to take his baggage, leaving me with the promise to return. It had been dark for two or three

hours, and, left alone, my *izvostchiki* thought it an excellent opportunity to dun me, but I was not to be drawn, and told them they would be paid later. Eventually I gave them half as much again as their correct fare, but of course they were dissatisfied, and one grasped me by the shoulder; but, laying my hand on my revolver, I warned him to stand off. What we were going to do, or where going, I did not then know. I was in the hands of my new companion, and I must trust to him to get me through.

Tramping off in the wake of the coolies, I found myself on the top of the embankment, with a group of soldiers. It was bitterly cold, the stars shone out clearly, and the frozen river lay silent below. We muffled ourselves in furs, and stamped our feet until, twenty minutes having elapsed, word was given to march. It appeared that we were allowed to defile over the bridge, my companion being a person of sufficient authority to get us by the challenging sentries. It was a long cavalcade, in single file, including all the coolies. Once an engine came along, and we flattened ourselves against the rail. For two miles, tumbling over stones and sleepers, we marched, the head of our party continually calling "*Skoro*" ("Quickly") to hurry up the coolies. At length we came to a long train of trucks standing in what appeared in the dark to be a siding, with two or three baggage waggons, one third-class carriage, and a service waggon, all occupied. Mr. Svollensky was not there, and half an hour elapsed before we could find any place; and it ended in my being thrust into an already full third-class carriage. It was an awkward moment; I was a perfect stranger among Russians, and they resented my intrusion, and looked not unnaturally with displeasure at my baggage, which was now blocking the way, and preventing the door from shutting. Fortunately, there was a sailor or two among the score of persons who already crowded the carriage, and, of whatever nationality, they are always jolly, good-natured individuals. One or two of my packages

were stowed under the seat, and the others afterwards came in handy for those who propped themselves upon the floor. I did not dream then that this was to be my home for the best part of a fortnight. The first night was spent as usual, in sitting upon a bare bench, trying to sleep, and as far as ever from solving the problem as to what to do with one's head. Three or four women were in the carriage, and I unwittingly brought down their ire upon me, for in the intervals between the shutting and the opening of the door, a passenger next to me had been comparing the discomforts of a seat on the bench with a sprawl on the floor, and I had taken the opportunities of his temporary withdrawals from the bench to put my feet there and half recline. I was soon roused by "Englishman! Englishman! you are taking up all the space," from the women who were lying across the bench and boxes between. My neighbour, however, was not long in deciding on the superior merits of the bench, where he was, at least, undisturbed; and the night dragged out in weary fashion. Two officers chose to sleep in the racks, which they found so comfortable, that they retained them until the end of our journey; but, considering the crowded state of the carriage, that we lived in it day and night, and that no ventilation was possible, except through the occasional opening of the door, I can only marvel that they did not die of suffocation. Four little double windows, like those in a gipsy cart, caulked and seamed against the winter's cold, gave us light; and we were fortunate in the possession of a tiny little stove in the far corner of the carriage, for although nothing could be cooked on it, it saved us from extreme cold.

From Kharbin to Tsitsikar, a distance of 168 miles, the line crosses the steppe and trenches on north-eastern Mongolia. Twice it crosses the boundary-line, and covers about fifty miles within that territory.*

* Mr. Hosie, our latest authority on Manchuria, gives the western boundary of Hey-lung-kiang, where it borders upon Mongolia, as

How can I adequately describe the limitless steppe—its unbroken level, its treeless waste, its sandy floor, scarce relieved by the scattered blades of coarse grass? For miles, for 50 miles, for 100 miles, and even for 150 miles, the same monotonous view unfolded itself.

How the traveller's eye is arrested by any moving object, and what a relief it is to the monotonous emptiness of the plain! It may be a troop of long-haired Bactrian camels, or a Mongol, seated high on his diminutive pony, coursing like the wind, the animal's mane and long tail streaming in the air; or again, it is a caravan of little covered carts, springless, and with solid wheels studded with nails, so familiar a sight to the residents of Peking.

But how dry and clear was the air; what glorious sunsets and starlight nights met the gaze of the tent-dweller of these regions!

Across the great steppe the train found it easy going, and the 168 miles, from Kharbin to Tsitsikar, were covered at the rate of six miles, or, deducting stoppages, eight miles an hour. It was as if we were on a calm tropical sea, save that the horizon was near, since we were low down. Nearing Tsitsikar, I saw for the first time three trees, and in a little while the plain assumed a rolling aspect with hills twenty feet in height. Wandering from the line to look closer at these mounds, I found tiny frozen meres at their bases. At a spot about eight miles east of the river Nonni, and sixteen miles from Tsitsikar—for the line leaves the

following the right bank of the Nonni river, from its junction with the Chol to its confluence with the Sungari. If this were so, the line would confine itself to Manchuria. I differ with diffidence from such an authority, but the view adopted in the text is borne out by several Russian maps of recent date. That the Russians would like to stretch the boundary as far south as the Nonni river, as described by Mr. Hosie, I have no doubt; unless, indeed, their position in Mongolia be already similar to that in Manchuria five years ago, in which case they will be indifferent to the details of a frontier, which will in time become the boundary of a province.

walled Manchu city and capital of Heh-lung-kiang that distance away—was a typical station ; that is to say, it was a spot where fuel was stacked, and a water-tower stood. It was midnight, and surmising from the fact of the train stopping that this was a potential station, though it was quite on the cards that the engine-driver had stopped merely at his own sweet will, I went in search of something to eat. Muffling myself in furs, I dropped on to the line, and, stumbling over wires and sleepers, made in the direction of a dimly lighted hut, three or four hundred yards from the railroad. A plank or two for seats, a couch of boxes, with a *shuba* over them, a rough counter with a small stock of tinned goods, vodka, etc., made up the inventory of the hut. The usual *shtchi* soup was forthcoming, and the welcome tumbler of tea. We hurried over our repast, and kept a look-out on the train, lest it should move off without us, but if we had known, we might have spared ourselves any anxiety on that score, for the train made a lengthy stay. The station-master, a few Kazaks and Chinese were helping to unload timber and winter stores, and at eight o'clock the next morning two officers rode up in haste from Tsitsikar to catch the train ; they were certainly in time, for it did not leave for another twenty-four hours.

This long stop allowed us the opportunity of wandering from the line, though it was never safe to stray far lest the train should incontinently depart. On the western side I found two forts flying the Russian flag. They consisted of walled compounds, with rude bastions at each corner, one of them enclosing a modest gymnasium. Kazaks were stationed here, though not in great force.

The soil is not, as might be expected, of a loose sand, but of a very friable sandstone, which falls to pieces at a kick. It is very saliferous, and from it soda is extracted, made up in the form of bricks, and sent into China. The semi-sandy subsoil was being quarried by a party of

Chinese coolies in railway employ, who were making lightly baked bricks for the station buildings. It was the hour of the midday meal, and they were gathered in groups round the welcome fires, some stewing onions, and others rolling dough with the dirtiest of hands.

The railroad itself had been hurriedly laid. But when this excuse is made, that is all that can be said for the responsible authorities. It was incredibly bad, the result of the extraordinary defalcations in connexion with its construction; indeed, it is believed that the so-called Chinese danger in Manchuria, during the year 1900, was largely manufactured in order to prevent a commission of inquiry from headquarters. The line had been laid in many places at the base of valleys, and will have to be shifted to a safe elevation above the flood area. Ballasting was noticeably absent; sleepers were sections of pine-trunks, rounded edge uppermost, with the bark still adhering, and, instead of being parallel to each other, lay at all manner of angles. I pointed this out to an official, and he shrugged his shoulders, replying, "What does it matter?"

I tried walking upon the sleepers on many occasions, and I found the intervals most irregular. A stride of four feet would be followed by one of six inches, and I did not wonder, after that, at the joltings we experienced in transit.

The light rails were merely pinned to the sleepers, which, in their turn, were not bedded, for I found them literally rock under my feet as I walked on them. The effect of a heavy Baldwin locomotive, weighing seventy to eighty tons, passing over rails of twenty pounds to the foot, can be imagined. Under such treatment they became as ribbons, and, without any exaggeration, wriggled both vertically and horizontally. Was there any wonder that our rate of progress was so slow? Our long construction-train, viewed from a distance, appeared like a modified

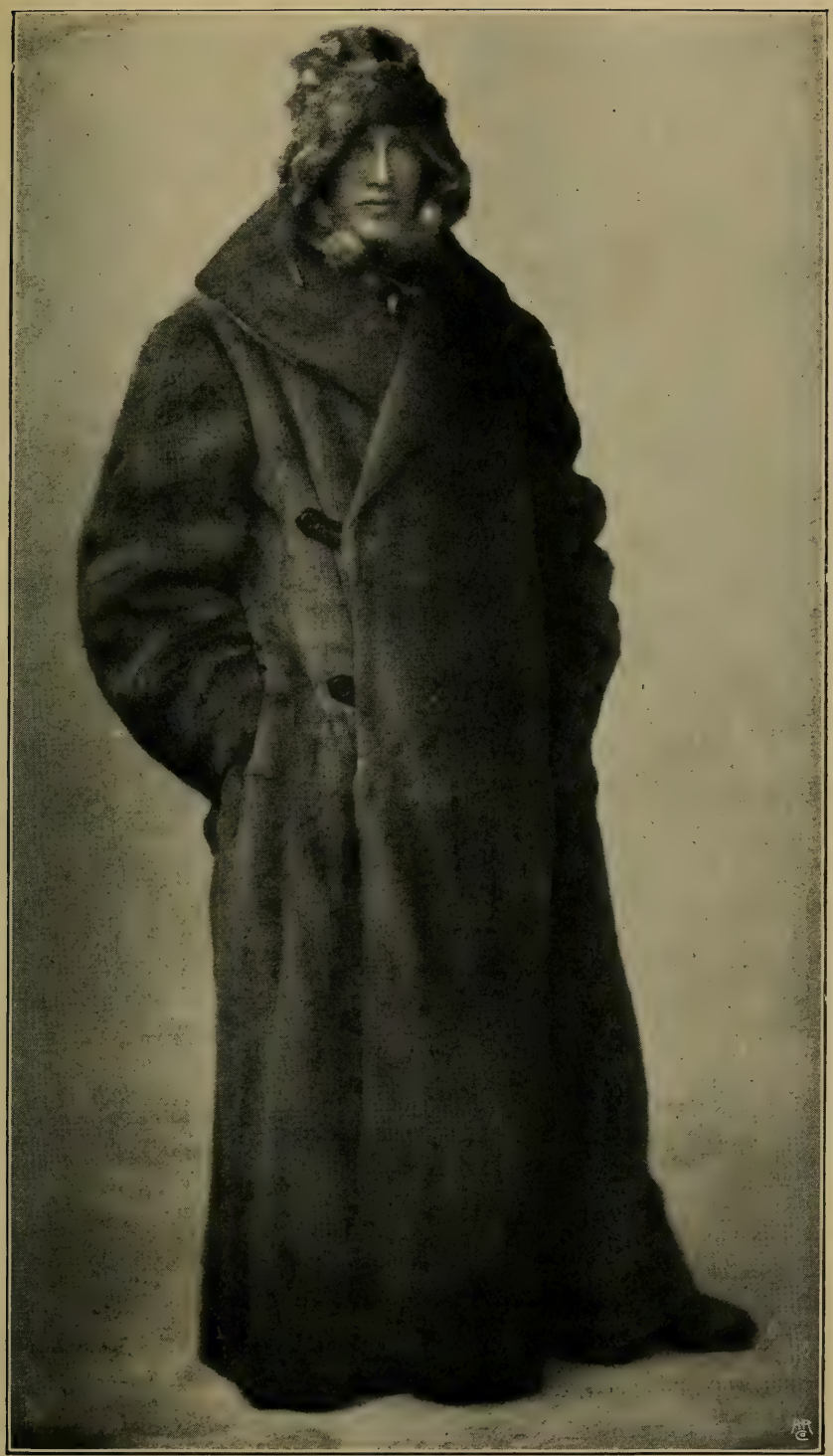
switchback. Accidents were of common occurrence, but we had to thank a prudent driver for nothing worse than derailment. Even on the best-laid part of the line, between Vladivostok and Kharbin, the gaping and yawning of the carriages had disturbed our attempts at slumber, and this was as nothing compared to my experience between Kharbin and the Siberian frontier.

CHAPTER XXII

MANCHURIA TO CHITA

The river Nonni—Overtaking the train—A Chinese village—The Khingans—A two and a half days' stop—Six thousand miles of snow—Curious dwellings—Manchuria station—Tickets obtained under difficulties—Struggles at buffets—Chita.

THE next morning a start was made from the potential station of Tsitsikar towards the great river Nonni, eight miles further on. A few solitary trees stood out here and there, making the monotony of the steppe more noticeable, but beyond the river one knew that the scenery must change, as we approached the Great Khingan or Hsinghan mountains. The Nonni is a tributary of the Sungari, and is the only great river which flows through the province of Heh-lung-kiang. It is navigable as far as Tsitsikar, and for light junks beyond even to Mergen. At the point where the line crosses, it is exactly half a mile in width. The great iron bridge, designed in Russia and made in America, was then in course of construction, and as the temporary wooden structure did not allow of our engine crossing, the trucks and horse-boxes had to be pushed over by large numbers of Chinese workmen. While this operation was in contemplation, and it took several hours to bring it about, we, passengers, traversed the structure on foot to the western bank of the river, where I found the Russian town of New Tsitsikar springing up. Having obtained a midday meal at a rough sort



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of restaurant, I joined some officers, their wives, and other passengers congregated at the western end of the bridge, where we waited two or three hours for the arrival of the train, pushed by its human motors. It was bitterly cold ; the great river was frozen across, and peasants were about on the ice. One was hauling wood, and a solitary woman had made a hole in the ice, and was rinsing clothes—a terribly cold process, for they froze as she slung them over her shoulder. A small crowd of Chinese coolies, clothed in wadded cotton garments, gathered round me, and, with childish curiosity, began to feel my fur coat. They had never seen anything like it before, and asked me, "*Chto eto takoy?*" ("What is it?") "*Malenkiy aleni*" ("Young (rein)deer (skin)"), I replied. Then, without the least hesitation—the Chinese and even the Russians put the most direct questions—they asked, "*Skolko stóit?*" ("How much is it worth?") I gave them a moderate figure, but they frankly disbelieved me, and thought it a great joke.

Late in the afternoon a fresh start was made, but only a few versts were covered before the train pulled up again. Its movements were so erratic that we could only make guesses as to what was going to happen in the near future ; sometimes it went backwards for considerable distances, but, on the whole, the forward movement prevailed, and we eventually reached our destination, covering 580½ miles from Kharbin in ten days and a quarter! From this time onward it became difficult to get food and drink ; and as shunting operations at this spot seemed likely to occupy us, for at least a few minutes, I ran across to a distant hut to obtain black bread and a kettle of water. In the back room was a stove, and the opportunity of boiling my kettle was not to be missed. A careful look-out had meanwhile to be kept, lest the train should move off, and, as it was, I had scarcely emerged from the hut when the rattle of the trucks announced a start. Fortunately, the speed was at no time very great, and running, with

loaf in one hand and kettle in the other, I managed to overtake it ; a friendly hand was reached down to seize my kettle, the loaf was thrown on board, and I leapt safely up.

Among our passengers in the carriage were a military captain and doctor, the former of whom had a Kazak orderly in attendance. This last sat opposite to me, and I found him useful, since he could forage better than I, and for an occasional tip would relieve me of the washing-up, after the primitive meals made in the carriage. But on leaving Tsitsikar he was missed ; two or three hours had passed, and we began to think that he had been left behind, when he suddenly turned up, intoxicated. He told an incoherent story, and, pulling out a pocket-book, flourished a roll of ruble notes, exclaiming, "*Slava Bogu ! Slava Bogu !*" ("Thank God ! Thank God !") This put a new face on matters, and the captain, who knew that he had not had these in his possession before, turned to me, since I slept near him, to ask if he had robbed me. The difficulties of obtaining money in Siberia had dictated my carrying more than I cared in this rough journey, and I had about 650 rubles in my pocket-book, but, on examining it, I found them intact. The orderly must have come by them at Tsitsikar. The captain severely scolded him, and the great hulking fellow fell down on his knees in the most abject manner, weeping copiously, and crying, "*Pazhal'sta ! Pazhal'sta !*" ("Please ! Please !") In spite of his entreaties to be forgiven he was dismissed to the horse-boxes, and we were, for the time being, without his services. That evening the train covered the quite extraordinary distance of about thirty-five miles, and then stopped for the night.

We had already caught a glimpse of low hills on the horizon, the spurs of the Great Khingan range. The scenery was changing ; the steppe, with its scanty coarse grass, where the Mongols find grazing ground for their

troops of ponies and herds of sheep, was giving way to wide, open valleys, sheltered by low hills. In these vales the soil is comparatively rich, and Chinese immigrants have been pouring in of late years to till them. The chief cereals grown are millet (*Sorghum vulgare*), but oats, wheat, barley, and buckwheat (*Polygonum fagopyrum*) are cultivated, and all are spring-sown. The winter is extreme, but the summer, though short, is hot, and ripens the crops quickly. Very rarely did I see any sign of cultivation along the route, and, even before the snow-clad regions were reached, the rough, neglected arable land was scarcely to be distinguished from the virgin soil.

The next morning found us in one of these open valleys. The hills were covered with larch, spruce, and birch, though somewhat thinned by railway demands for sleepers and fuel; and in the course of a short climb, to obtain a view of this entrance into the Khingans, I saw a few hazel grouse (*Tetrao bonasia*).

At the end of a nineteen hours' stop, it was announced that we should not leave for another twenty-four; and, interpreting this to allow me, with safety, a two hours' absence, I ventured to take a constitutional. Making my way to the little colony of Russian log-houses, I secured a midday meal, and then sauntered in a southerly direction to a Manchu, or rather, Chinese village. In the wide street were groups of Chinese peasants, and as I approached there were signs of a disturbance, promptly quelled, however, by a Chinaman in gorgeous attire, with blue wadded gaiters, and black velvet high boots, who rode up, mounted on a sturdy Mongol pony. On stalls a medley of goods was exposed for sale, including fur-lined Manchu hats, gloves, boots, and wadded clothing, bricks of tea, and that favourite delicacy, roast *pork*. The thatched houses, built of mud, with chimneys on the ground, connected by tunnels, were, externally, much neater than the Russian abodes. Each stood in its yard, fenced by a paling of long twigs.

Just off the street was a tiny Chinese temple in process of completion. I was surprised at the skill displayed, both in its structure and in the blending of the various colours used in its decoration. What amused me, and perhaps reflected the servile attitude of the Chinese here towards the Russians, were two small paintings on the pediment. They represented a street in a Russian town. The parallel lines of houses approached each other in the distance with exaggerated perspective. Each house was of a different colour, white, blue, red, or green, and if only they had had wheels under them, one would have taken the two rows for trains, consisting of first, second, third, and fourth class carriages, especially since one house in the foreground possessed a queer-looking iron funnel, evidently meant for a stove-flue. Between the lines of houses stretched the broad, snow-covered street, down which a *troika* was speeding; but, most significant of all to appear on a Chinese temple, was the picture of a Russian church, with its unmistakable bulbous spire.

On my return to the carriage my fellow-passengers were loud in their expressions of astonishment at my venturing alone to the Chinese village, and congratulated me on returning alive; such were the notions of the Russian "man in the street," fed on official reports, of the bellicose attitude of the Chinese in Manchuria.

Our alarms lest the train should go off without warning and strand us in this inhospitable country were not always without cause. On my return I found that the train was definitely announced to start at noon of the next day, and on the strength of this the captain and doctor went to enjoy the festivities of an evening "ashore," but the next morning at 7 o'clock the train departed, leaving them behind. At our next stopping-place, a potential station, we heaved their baggage out, trusting to their dropping across it in the course of their progress. The rail now plunged further into the Khingans, but the route demanded

no very difficult engineering work, since it followed river-beds, and only here and there necessitated a small cutting out of the side of a hill. The mountains, or rather hills, for they did not exceed 2000 feet, were rounded, sparsely wooded, and separated by wide valleys. The scenery reminded me of wilder parts of the north island of New Zealand. Off the line of route the heights are thickly clad, and abound in game, for the Khingans yield the best hunting in Manchuria, and are noted as the habitat of the tiger, wild boar, bear, lynx, etc., and a goodly number of feathered game.

A damaged section of the railroad delayed us for a few hours, and only a few more versts were covered before dark. Here the engine-driver slept for the night, and the next morning being Sunday, got up late. Life in the railway carriage on one day was so like any other, that it came as a surprise to us when one of the party discovered that it was Sunday. I do not know how many hundred miles off the nearest church was, and in any case the train did not propose to rest, so failing the orthodox manner of celebrating the day, they hit upon the plan of cleaning their boots. Where blacking came from I do not know. Life was a mere pigging, we slept in our clothes, swaddled in furs or sheep-skins, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we could get a kettle or two of water for the whole party to wash with. The little stove had to be diligently fed with scraps and ends of telegraph-poles and sleepers, which we picked up on the road. We warmed ourselves, taking it in turns chopping these up with the Kazak's sword, until we broke it; for its owner had been received back since his captain had been left behind. At noon on the tenth day since leaving Vladivostok, we reached the highest point on the Manchurian Railway. The line ascends by a series of zigzags to the (temporary) station, appropriately called "Khingan," attaining an altitude of 1930 feet above sea-level, but these zigzags are to be obviated by two tunnels,

each of rather more than half a mile in length (3150 and 3010 feet.)

From this point began the worst part of the journey, and the passengers had to suffer long delays, intense cold and the absence of any arrangements for food. Descending from the summit, the train proceeded for half an hour and stopped for the same time, again moving on for half an hour it rested for two hours and a quarter, and so on; eventually coming to a standstill at 9 p.m. in an open valley high up among the mountains in a snow-storm and a howling wind. It is said that the Khingan mountains have the unenviable reputation of furnishing the coldest spot on their latitude. I can well believe it, for though it was yet only November 19, the thermometer registered 63° of frost (Fahr.). A calm, clear, cold day in Siberia is most enjoyable, but when you add to the extreme cold a strong wind, and snow, dry as fine powder, driving like needles at your face, you will not wonder that we exclaimed at our engine-driver for choosing this particular spot in which to make a stay of two a half days. The station possessed a name, Mendukhey, but not much else. It was represented by a log-hut in course of erection, where we were told the railway agent "lived." The two soldiers on duty slept in a box outside in this terrible cold.

To add to our miseries our supply of wood gave out, and the morning found us with the stove fireless, and the snow driving in between the match-boarding of the carriage. Some hardy individuals were washing their hands in the snow for want of water. Rumour had it that nothing could be obtained here, but, fortunately, by paying famine prices we got a little of both bread and water. This was the beginning of a stretch of snow-clad country extending to Berlin, a distance of more than 6000 miles.

The first day passed, and our expectations of departing remained unfulfilled; the next day we dared not hope for a start, and learning that hot water was to be bought in the

agent's hut, I dashed over, kettle in hand, to take advantage of this exceptional opportunity. A woman was retailing hot water, but the samovar, being watched, naturally took a long time to boil, and there being some movement of shunting on the part of the train, I at length demanded of an official if the train were starting, to which he replied, "*Sey chas!*" ("Immediately!") Gathering up my fur coat, but minus my hot water, I made a dash for the train, kettle in hand, for it had already begun to move. Some of the horse-boxes had little platforms at the end, and climbing on to one of these, I took my stand, congratulating myself on not having been left behind, and trusting for a later opportunity to join my carriage. The train, however, had only proceeded a little way before I saw that it had come in two, and the carriage with my fellow-passengers in was left behind; I therefore hastily clambered down and leapt off, fortunately not a difficult process at the speed at which we were going.

Early the next morning our portion of the train made a start. What a relief it was to be moving, after two and a half days at a standstill, even though at the rate of four to six miles an hour! The night had been spent in vainly endeavouring to keep warm, though we had slept in furs and felt top-boots. Inside, the snow penetrated between the boards, outside, the wind whistled relentlessly, driving the snow before it in whirling clouds, producing the effect of a drifting fog.

After a few versts the engine stopped to drink, but not for the passengers to do so. Two or three forms wrapped in furs were seen, in face of the intense cold, trying to find wood to warm their waggon. We continued to make frequent stops, and stayed until midday at another station site, Yashi by name, where there was no buffet.

Some of the horse-boxes had no stove, and others were fireless for want of fuel. Women were crying with the cold, and begging to be taken back. The future looked

very black. A crust of black bread four days old and a lamb's tongue, carefully eked out, alone remained to me. By the wayside were the dwellings of some Russian platelayers, and to them I wended my way in search of bread. These homes reminded me of the Troglodyte Suh-shen, who dwelt here 3000 years ago. I had to descend into the "bowels of the earth" to find their inmates; for the ground was hollowed out to a depth of about six to ten feet, and a roof of timber, sacks, earth, and snow kept them sheltered and warm. To all my inquiries was given the same answer; they had no bread to spare. Matters were going from bad to worse; for even water had to be tapped from the locomotive when the driver was not looking. Fortune, however, again smiled upon us, for that evening the train managed to reach Khailar station, and we had the luxury of a good meal in a buffet.

At about a mile from the station is the Chinese town which was taken by the Russians during their Manchurian campaign; and the illustration in the text represents the Chinese generals receiving Governor-general Grodekov. From here the railroad was in rather better condition, having been one of the first sections constructed, and we reached Ongun, forty miles distant, the next morning. Here we were on a lower level, the wind had subsided, the snow-storm ceased, and the sun shone with considerable power at midday. Numerous magpies were hopping about in the snow, and I counted at one spot twenty-four of these winter frequenters of the post-roads of Siberia.

With the improvement in the line the end came sooner than we had expected, and our only delays during the last few hours had been to drop occasional lots of telegraph-poles. The great hills had been left behind, and the scenery had changed to a series of low broken mounds scantily covered with Swiss pines. The train continued through the night, until at 3 a.m. I was suddenly aroused and informed that we had arrived at the terminus of the

CHINESE GENERAL AT TSITSIKAR RECEIVES THE RUSSIAN GOVERNOR-GENERAL GRODEKOV.

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Chinese Eastern Railway Company, Manchuria station. So long had this carriage been my abode—this was the eleventh day and the fifteenth of my connexion with that train—that it was almost with a sense of homelessness I said my farewells to it, and stepped out on to a wide and unfamiliar plain of snow.

There were yet a dozen miles to cover before the Siberian frontier would be crossed, and these were traversed that same evening. Altogether, it had taken exactly fifteen days to cross Manchuria, a distance of 943½ miles, at an average speed of sixty-three miles a day. Those of our passengers who had come from Port Arthur had spent no less than three weeks in the train. But I must hasten to explain that these conditions are completely altered to-day, and that the traveller can accomplish this part of the journey in less than four days, in the comfort of a first-class compartment, with no difficulties as to food or heating arrangements.

The line itself, in its reckless bedding and light rails, leaves much to be desired, but the excellent carriage-springs save the passenger from the gapings and yawnings of benches and partitions that I experienced. I had no cause to grumble. Probably with the rest of the passengers I was a nuisance to the authorities during the completion of the line. I paid nothing for my journey over the Chinese Eastern Railway, for no charge was allowed to be made until its opening, and I record my thanks for the privilege I enjoyed.

It was a bitter night as I stood outside the carriage and realized that the threads of travel had once more to be gathered up. The first thing to do was to explore the buffet, about a quarter of a mile distant. In the large outer room were crowded about 200 *muzhiki* and third-class passengers, through whom I made my way to one labelled first-class. This contained a bar and a long dining-table; and by the light of three candles I could see that the

floor was covered with baggage and sleeping forms. The chairs were also occupied by people in an attitude of uncomfortable repose; on one sat a man with his head in his hands; on another, his wife with her head on his knees. A half a dozen were wide awake, and, looking round, I asked, "Is there a porter here?" A jolly-faced, elderly woman sitting at the door, amused at such a demand, smilingly replied, "No." Such an institution as a porter was a thing of the future. I appealed to a bystander for advice, but without result; so going into the third-class room offered a ruble to any one who would fetch my baggage. This was successful, and, my miscellaneous chattels being piled up on the floor of the buffet, I climbed on top of the pile and tried in vain to sleep.

At an early hour, for all were tired of watching out the night, the restaurant-keeper was prevailed upon to boil the samovar and make tea. It was still dark outside. The occupiers of the mattresses, and those rolled in blankets on the bare floor, began to rouse up. They must have become accustomed to their conditions by this time, for they had been waiting for four days for a train going west. There had been a heavy snowfall, and the engine-driver had run the train off the line and blocked it. We, new arrivals, were very fortunate, for it was announced that the train would leave at 5.15 that evening, only fifteen hours after our arrival.

Only a few days afterwards, a telegram appeared in an Irkutsk paper stating that this piece of line had been blocked by snowdrifts, and would take 600 men fourteen days to clear it. I congratulated myself on having escaped a fortnight on the floor of the buffet at Manchuria station, although I considerably discounted the news. It probably represented the estimate of the official responsible for the clearing of the line, who would not be averse from receiving the pay of 600 Chinese coolies for fourteen days,

when a quarter of that number had been employed for half the time!

Outside the buffet all was under snow, and a bitter wind swept across the plain, for we were situated, as it were, in a vast saucer, with the low distant hills representing the edges. A few log-houses, the homes of officials, were in course of erection; but the populous part of this new settlement was the Mongol quarter. Snow-covered mounds on closer inspection revealed dwellings within. Around these were small yards bounded by walls of snow, behind which shaggy ponies were sheltering. A barrel on wheels, drawn by one of these steeds, and attended by a dusky Mongol, clad in felt boots and a long sheep-skin-lined *dokha*, passed to and fro. He was hauling water, which was only kept from freezing by the jolting, for externally the barrel was hoary with congealed icicles, like stalactites. Many of my fellow-passengers, having learnt by bitter experience, were determined not to be caught napping again. They were besieging the rude little stores, and laying in a stock of tinned foods, rye-bread, etc. We passengers, fresh from a train which started indifferently five hours before the reported time or two days after, regarded with considerable scepticism a time-table which stated that the train for Lake Baikal left at 5.15 p.m. It was necessary to ascertain, in the first place, what time the railway kept here, whether Vladivostok time, local, Irkutsk, or St. Petersburg, for between the first and the last there is a difference of six hours and forty-six minutes. This point settled, the booking-office had to be found. Some said it was down the road, but it was ultimately located in a certain back room behind the third-class waiting-room.

The next process—ticket issuing—was a serious business, both from the booking-clerk's and the passengers' points of view. I had noted that there were but twelve first-class seats in the train which was bound for Lake

Baikal, and I fully realized the importance of an early application. It was reported that the office would open at 4 p.m. About 1 o'clock I repeated my inquiries, and was advised to go at once and apply. I found the outer room filled with a crowd of surging, struggling, third-class passengers, vainly trying to get near the tiny opening. Two or three better-dressed persons, wanting second or first class tickets, were trying a side-door in a passage, and I followed them ; but all were indignantly and angrily refused. Then one of my fellow-passengers through Manchuria politely offered to get mine as well as his own ticket. I thanked him, and seeing by this time that a move had been made for the first-class carriage, tipped a waiter to carry my baggage to the line, and plant it opposite the carriage. Meanwhile, climbing on to the train, I tried to get the conductor to allot me a seat ; but he, poor man, besieged from all points, was well-nigh beside himself. As I was being refused one *coupé*, which was claimed as reserved, and had placed my hand on the handle of the next, a Russian official, with a violence and rudeness which the foreigner only experiences when the velvet glove is involuntarily withdrawn, seized it, and claimed that "this and that and the next were engaged." At this juncture I appealed to the station-master, and he led me into the booking-office. There I saw what was going on behind the scenes, and why the distribution of tickets was such a lengthy business. The price of each was a matter of reference, followed by subtle calculations on the abacus, after which there was much writing on the paper and its counterfoil before a ticket could be issued. Meanwhile, the crowd fought and struggled at the little opening. For four hours some of them must have pushed and scrimmaged before they obtained their tickets. To my surprise, the station-master humbled himself before the "great" booking-clerk, and begged a ticket for me, a stranger ; and it was full ten minutes before he would consider the station-master's request, and only then by

A BURIAT. [*To face page* 441.

the additional persuasion of placing the exact money before him. The first-class being hopelessly full, I had to content myself with a second-class ticket, but it was another matter to obtain a seat.

The journey was one of four nights and three days to Lake Baikal; but, fortunately for me, I intended to stop at Chita, which would give me only two nights and a day in this crowded train, and the chance of getting a less full one for the rest of the journey.

The second-class being also full, there was an altercation between the station-master and some officers, but facts being too strong for them, the position had to be accepted, and room made for all. The difficulty came at night to accommodate us all, but it ended in one of the passengers, a pleasant, rough, little Siberian tradesman, who told me afterwards a good deal of his story, retiring into the rack for the night, and a big official stretching himself on the boxes and baggage between the seats.

The frontier was crossed at the end of an hour, and we entered again into a country of low rolling hills and frozen rivers. The land was neither wooded nor cultivated, but grazing ground, and as the train followed up the valleys we could see Buriat horsemen tending their sheep and camels. A youth was breaking a hole in the frozen surface of the river to obtain water, and carrying it up to the dwellings—little black holes—in the hillside, which looked not unlike a rabbit-warren. The snow covering was thin on the borders of the steppe region, and the herds were finding pasture only by pawing at the grass beneath. As we advanced into the mountainous region, where the snow-fall is greater, the line was wreathed in white. In the cuttings it was curious to observe the work of the wind in great overhanging ledges, spirals, and odd shapes of snow. King Frost had laid his seal on them, and fixed these fantastic forms for months, for no thaw would loosen them.

What a luxury it was to be in a train which continued

on the move, with only a few minutes' stop at stated points. We were proceeding at a fair speed, at eight and a half miles, or, deducting stoppages, eleven miles an hour. The distance from Manchuria station to *Kitaesky razyeyd* (Chinese junction) is 340 versts, or 226 miles. Here we should join the main Trans-Baikalian line, which runs from Stretensk to Lake Baikal. It was still not an easy matter to procure proper meals, for though there were buffets at certain stations, the train was overcrowded, and the supply of food was insufficient. At such times the Russian veneer of politeness wore off, and the ordinary English visitor to Russia who is impressed with the courtesy and attention he receives, would have been completely taken aback. It was a fight—officers, military and civil, merchants, and sailors, all struggling in the first-class buffet—to get food. If one were fortunate enough to order early a *stakan chai*, then somebody laid claim to and seized it. The *zakuska* (*hors d'œuvres*) and *pirishki* (a dough-nut with minced meat inside) on the bar rapidly disappeared, and a uniformed official would be seen stealing behind the bar into the kitchen to take the pasties from the very frying-pan. Under such circumstances the foreigner, who had yet to learn the particular form of eatables offered for sale in this part of Siberia, was severely handicapped. The train moved off before half the passengers had secured supplies. The lesson, however, was soon learned, and in future I knew how to proceed. As the train neared a station I slipped on my furs, stationed myself on the foot-board, and on the moment of stopping dashed into the buffet and called aloud for *pirishki* and *chai*. At two or three stations a stay of twenty minutes or half an hour, as in India, was intended to allow time for a meal, but the supply and accommodation were hopelessly inadequate. Here a new plan had to be adopted. Penetrating into the kitchen, I pacified the hurried and worried women, sat down amid the pots and pans, dirty plates and knives, quickly supped a basin of soup, and rushed for the train.

After Aga station, about three-quarters of the way along this loop-line from the frontier, we wound among low mountains, the slopes of which were sparsely covered with birch and firs. Several rivers—the Turga, Onon, Aga, and Ingoda—all tributaries of the Shilka, were crossed before reaching the main line. At the junction we arrived from three to four hours late, moved on to Karimskaya, but had then to await another six hours for the portion from Stretensk, bringing a few passengers and empty *arestanti* (prisoners') carriages.

It was not yet so cold here as in the Khingan mountains. Each station boasted its thermometer, and I noted at 7.20 a.m. that morning one registering – 19° (R.), or 43° of frost (Fahr.). The sun shone brilliantly by day, but not a sign of thaw was visible. It was a glorious panorama in the glad sunlight, and again by cold moonlight, of endless snow unspoiled by foot of man.

Chita was reached later in the same morning, and here I descended to look over the museum. The town is picturesquely situated near the confluence of two tributaries, the Chita and the Kaidolovka, with the Ingoda. All around are noble hills. It has a population of about 12,000, and owes its development to the Dekabrists, the exiles of noble family, who were arrested on December (*Dekabr*) 14, 1825, and banished hither.

A couple of sledges transported me and my baggage to a hostelry, which announced "furnished apartments." How one appreciated the luxury of a decent wash and change. Even the sight of the steaming samovar was not to be compared with the pleasure of taking off one's clothes for the first time for a fortnight. Outside, the town looked drear and cold to a stranger. Not a soul in the place spoke English, but, making my way to the director of the museum, I was kindly rendered all assistance in an inspection of the excellent ethnological and natural history collection.

I was often astonished at the want of observation

and intelligent interest shown by the Russian official in the things about him. Questions about agriculture, manufacture, distances, altitude, etc., were either answered by a "*Ne znayu*" ("I don't know"), or by a ridiculously false statement. The comparatively recent development of towns in Russia, and consequently the fewer opportunities he has of rubbing shoulders intellectually with others, would seem partly to account for his inferiority to his German and English brother. If I gave up expecting to get information of this sort, at least I hoped to learn from officials something about matters of which they claimed to be the public repository. On this occasion I visited the Russo-Chinese Bank, to make a few inquiries, and they politely offered to save me the drive to the station by telephoning. Having been a wanderer in the Orient and Southern hemisphere since I had left Europe, more than a year before, I had not the latest information as to the days of departure of the train *de luxe* from Irkutsk for Moscow. This was the substance of the question which was put to the station-master. "*Ne znayu*" was the answer. I suggested that he might have a time-table for me to purchase, or a time-sheet to which he could refer. "*Nyet*" ("No"). There was nothing to do but to proceed at once, lest I should miss the express, which ran, I believed, thrice a week ; but it was as if the station-master at Inverness did not know, and had no time-table to tell him, when the Scotch express left Edinburgh for London.

From Chita I continued my journey towards Lake Baikal, after the necessary preliminary inquiry as to what time the 9.13 a.m. train would start. The train contained no detachment from Manchuria, only passengers from Stretensk and intermediate places. The visits to station buffets were therefore attended with greater success and comfort. The first-class *coupé*, which I shared with a merchant, was quite comfortable, but at dusk an incident in its illumination reminded me of earlier experiences. The conductor came round and inserted in a glass frame, giving

both on to the corridor and into our *coupé*, a piece of tallow candle, lighted it, and then locked it up lest it should be stolen! The result in candle-power was about as poor as the electric lighting of the train *de luxe* from Irkutsk is good.

The country between Chita and Lake Baikal is exceedingly mountainous, the railway following a sinuous or zigzag course, and keeping to river valleys. The famous Yablonoi range, which extends in a north-easterly direction from Mongolia to the Yakutsk *oblast*, is here crossed, and the highest elevation (3137 feet) of the railroad attained beyond Yablonovaya station, nearly fifty miles from Chita. Following the river Khilok, for 200 miles in a west-south-westerly direction, the line trends north-westerly for nearly seventy miles, and then returns to a west-south-westerly course for twenty-one miles to Verkhne Udinsk. It is the mountainous nature of Trans-Baikalia that compels this devious course.

At Verkhne Udinsk the traveller will descend, if he is interested in the Buriats, to visit that very interesting Mongol people and their chief monastery.

CHAPTER XXIII

TRANS-BAIKALIA TO MOSCOW

The Buriats—Nomads—Lamas—Gelung Nor Lamaserai—A "living god"—Mystery play—English missionaries—Lake Baikal—Irkutsk—Pictures *en route*—Boundary of two continents—The Ural mountains—Isolation of villages.

OCCASIONALLY, at one of the wayside restaurants, I had met members of the Buriat tribe, and observed the Russian soldier or peasant regarding them, like most ignorant people the world over, as a legitimate field of curiosity, or a species of joke. When, however, as I stood guarding my baggage in the buffet at Manchuria station, the door opened, and a fine, tall figure, dressed in a handsome, claret-coloured, fur-lined robe and girdle, a crimson silk Chinese close-fitting hat, and long scarlet silk tassel, stepped in, I asked myself, "Could this indeed be a Buriat?" He seemed out of place here amongst us travel-stained voyagers. The House of Lords, on the day of its opening by the king in person, was the fitting place for him. That he should be a member of a nomad tribe seemed scarcely credible. Yet it was so, and there are many such as he rich in flocks and herds.

This tribe, which has been estimated to number at least 200,000, has its habitat on the south-eastern side of Lake Baikal, chiefly around Selenginsk, but is scattered as far east as Nerchensk, and to the north around Barguzin. Like the Iceni of Norfolk, they are a horse-breeding people, though their herds of camels, cattle, and sheep are by

BURIAT FAMILY AND "YURTA" (TENT). [*To face page* 447.

no means insignificant. Living in portable felt tents, or *yurti*, as the Russians call them, they are ever on the move, roaming at large with their flocks and herds over the vast steppe.

In the winter, when terribly cold and boisterous winds sweep across the steppe, and the scant vegetation is dried up, shelter is sought in the near hills. Then it is with reluctance that they betake themselves to the "closeness" of the valleys, where the hills hem them in; but, with the return of spring, comes the longing fulfilled for the freedom of the far-reaching steppe, and the race, for the mere fun of it, over the boundless expanse. Where else, but in this dry, clear air of the almost rainless steppe, seated at the tent-door, can one gaze on such glorious sunsets, or watch the luminous stars steal out, one by one, like pendants in the atmosphere, and not mere apertures in an opaque hemisphere?

Like many another Mongol tribe, their early history is at present unknown to us. That they were Shamanists, believers in witchcraft and sorcery, is certain; and that Buddhist missionaries from Urga, in 1676, began a successful work of conversion, is also known. Only a few thousand adhere to the old superstitions, though the Lamaism, which the majority profess, has incorporated a number of the superstitious practices of the older religion, and merely re-labelled them.

The illustration shows a Buriat home. The structure is generally about ten feet in height, and fifteen feet in diameter, and consists of laths, forming a lattice-work below, covered with thick felts, manufactured from the produce of their own herds. On entering the three-foot door the visitor finds strips of felt, or, if the owner be well-to-do, rich mats, spread on the ground and hung round the walls. A great trunk, handsomely arabesqued, and containing all the holiday attire of the family, including the silver ornaments, charm-boxes, etc., stands

against the wall. Near by is the altar, with its *burkhans*, or statuettes of Buddhistic saints, prayer-wheels, altar vases, and bell.

The fire is made, in this woodless country, as in parts of India, with cakes of dung (*argols*), and over it hangs the pot of boiling water, into which is thrown brick-tea, mutton-fat, salt, millet, and milk for the meal. The occupants of the tent are arrayed, for their everyday duties, in rough garb. The men wear long, full ulsters of *tapu* (Chinese cloth), held up by a girdle, from which hang tobacco-pouch, pipe, and tinder-box; and Chinese top-boots. On festive occasions the well-to-do dress themselves in richly figured silks, trimmed with velvet. The women ordinarily wear a short jacket over a tunic of coarse stuff, but on high days and holidays these are exchanged for richly coloured stuffs, beautifully embroidered; and their persons are decked out, as in the illustration, with bracelets, silver charms, ear-rings, and beads woven into their two pigtails.

The boys are taught by the lamas, and it is as much the ambition of the Buriat parents that their son should become a lama, and join the ranks of the educated and ruling class, as it is that of the Scotch mother to have her son become a "meenister." This tendency prevails to such an extent that the Russian Government has had to step in and prevent the undue increase of this body, which, being unproductive materially, threatens to drain the resources of the laity. The term "Lamaism" has been given to that ritualistic form of Buddhism which prevails in Tibet, Mongolia, and China, while the purer form is alone found in Burma and Siam. The studies of a Buriat lad under the lamas begin very early, strictly speaking, at the age of eight, and last from ten to twelve years. Beginning with the Tibetan alphabet, he learns by rote proverbs and wise-saws, and gradually enters on his curriculum of Tibetan theology, Mongol literature, Tibetan medicine, astronomy, astrology, and Buddhistic philosophy.

BURIAT WIFE AND MAIDEN IN FESTIVE ATTIRE.

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THE LATE K'AN-PO, OR GRAND LAMA OF THE BURIATS.

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His examinations and disputations successfully passed, a candidate may gain his B.D., and go on to his D.D., or the titles which correspond thereto. Nevertheless, the great bulk of the lamas are not educated men, and their knowledge is very superficial. There are notable exceptions to this rule, and the late K'an-po, or Khamba Lama, or Grand Lama of the Buriats at the *Gelung Nor Datsan*, whose photograph I give, was a man of considerable education and wide reading. The *Gelung Nor* (Lake of Priests), or *Gusinoy Ozero*, *i.e.* Goose Lake, as the Russians call it, is a sheet of water about fourteen miles long, separated from the south-eastern end of Lake Baikal by the Khamar Daban * range.

Here is the chief Datsan, Lamaserai, or monastery of the Buriats. The traveller on the Trans-Baikalian Railway descends at Verkne Udinsk, and, posting for a full hundred miles through the winter snow, reaches Novi (New) Selenginsk. From here a track, leading westwards among low hills, brings him, after sixteen miles, to the lake. At the southern end rises a curious white temple, surrounded by log-huts. The hillsides are strikingly bare of trees; and beyond appear the blue mountains of the Khamar Daban, shutting off Lake Baikal.

The three-storied temple of the Lamaserai stands out prominently above the surrounding buildings. Its style is Chinese, and the white walls contrast with the brightly painted, vari-coloured woodwork of the galleries, adorned with gilt plates. Smaller temples, of one story only, surmounted with a bowed roof, called *sume*, contain each a sacred *burkhan*. The lamas are indignant at these being called idols, and disclaim any notion of the worship of what they regard as material representations of saints. Around the *sume* clusters quite a little town, comprising the dwellings of the lamas and the *khouvarsks*, or seminarists.

The head of the hierarchical order of the Buriats is an

* Daban is a Mongol word meaning a pass.

Abbot, or Kan-po (also called Khamba) Lama, and he is commonly given the title of Dalai, or Grand Lama of the Buriats. The supreme title of Dalai (or ocean) strictly belongs to the "Pope" at Tibet, and next in order to him is the Pan-ch'en Rin-po-ch'e, also of Tibet, an ecclesiastic held in greater spiritual reverence, though of less political influence, than the Dalai Lama. After these follow in order of rank two whose districts lie on the borders of Tibet; but the Mongols regard the Khutuktu, or Kan-po Lama of Urga, as next to the Dalai Lama of Tibet. At many of the Lamaserais are also *khubligháns*, or re-incarnations of Tibetan saints, and these are looked upon with great reverence; in fact, unless the Abbot himself claims also to be a re-incarnation, the former takes spiritual precedence.

The accompanying illustration shows one of these re-incarnations, or "living gods," as they are sometimes called. Chosen when a baby as the repository of the re-born saint, the child is brought up under the charge of the lamas. He is regarded as sinless, but pays dearly for such a reputation. He has a poor time, and his secluded life checks his development, and leaves him the inferior and tool of the lamas.

It was with this re-incarnated saint that my friend, M. Labbé, had an interview. The day was far advanced when the traveller arrived, and quarters were found for him in the village. The next morning, after due ceremony, he was ushered into the presence of the *khubligan*, or sinless one, Taranatha by name, a youth of pleasant countenance, and splendidly arrayed in silks. The interview that followed was eminently characteristic, both of the Buddhistic saint and the Frenchman. The one was all dignity and condescension, the other all suavity and politeness. The gegen expressed the hope that his distinguished visitor from a far-off land had found his accommodation in the village to his taste. M. Labbé replied

TARANATHA, A BURIAT "KHUBILGAN," OR "LIVING BUDDHA."

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with ceremonious thanks, but could not refrain from mentioning that he had suffered from the attention of fleas. "However," he added, "I killed about thirty of them." "I regret it," said the gegen, gravely. "It was a sin to have done so. How do you know, but that in your next existence, you yourself may become a flea?" "Then," replied M. Labbé, with true French politeness, "I should never attack your reverence!"

Lamaism has seen many incorporations of pagan deities and customs. Shamanistic tribes, other than the Buriats, were early received into the bosom of the Church, and, to make their entrance easier, their gods and rites adopted under new names or with slight modifications.

One such notable custom is the Mystery Play. In Tibet it is called the Dance of the Red Tiger Devil, and is said by Mr. Waddell * to have originated in the Shamanistic exorcisms of evil spirits, such as I have already depicted among the Orochons, with the added human, and perhaps cannibalistic, rites of earlier times. The motive to-day is the assassination of the "Julian of Lamaism by a lama disguised as a Shamanist dancer," but among the Buriats a much simpler significance is attached to their Mystery Play, or Tsam as they call it, viz. the triumph of good over evil spirits.

Down in the space railed off in front of the temple is to be seen a vast crowd. Thousands of Buriats have come from great distances to witness the scene. As the audience waits expectantly, the noise of many musical instruments is heard. Big drums are booming, eight-feet trumpets are blowing, conch shells are sounding, cymbals are clashing, and triangles jangling, when suddenly several wild figures, in the strangest of masks, rush upon the scene. Some wear death's-head masks, or a combination of Father Christmas and Neptune; another a stag's head and antlers, and yet others the heads of beasts, horned and not

* The Buddhism of Tibet or Lamaism.

horned, that would puzzle even the President of the Zoological Society. Grinning demons mingle in the crowd of hideous figures, one wearing a great open-mouthed devil mask, with little flags fluttering, and several other actors, who are maskless, having on their heads great hats with gilded filigree work. It is a strange but brilliant scene. The flashing of jewels and the rapid mingling of brocades, scarlet silks, purple velvet, and cords and tassels of all hues produce a wonderful kaleidoscopic effect. The spectator, dazzled by the brilliancy of the scene, and dazed by the din of the musical instruments, at length makes out that the lamas without masks and armed with daggers, who appear to typify the good spirits, have vanquished the death's heads and the miscellaneous demons and monsters of evil, and been left victors on the field.

The musical instruments which do duty at the Tsam are regularly in demand for the summons to the daily service in the temple. The older lamas and highest dignitaries have theirs in the privacy of their own abode, and only attend on state occasions. By the third call of the trumpet all the lamas must be in their places, the Kanpo taking the post of honour, at the further end to the right of the central passage-way. The service consists of the chanting or intoning of prayers, and lasts ordinarily about a quarter of an hour. In his "Vom Japanischen Meer zum Ural" Graf Keyserling gives a translation of the remarkable creed recited, which runs thus—"I believe in the (holy) Teacher, in the existence of all beneficent Buddhas—present, past, and future—and also in the lamas and their disciples. I believe in Buddha (Gautama), his holy doctrine, the clergy, the religious assembling of ourselves together in the temple, and in the guardian spirits of the faith. I believe in Buddha, in the high priest, and in the saints. I repent of all the sins which I have committed, in general and in particular. I serve the well-being of all created things and rejoice therein, and in my heart I bear Buddha and all."

THE ACTORS (LAMAS) IN THE MYSTERY PLAY.

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SUMMONS TO THE TEMPLE SERVICE.

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It is an impressive declaration of faith, and a magnificent challenge to the powers of evil; but, like more civilized peoples, they can scarcely be said to live up to the standard of it. As I have already mentioned, Shamanism disguised still plays its part, and the traveller will come across select spots where the spirit of the wood or of the hills is propitiated by an array of rags fluttering in the breeze. Even Buddhist and Shintoist Japan, with all its modern dressing, can supply many similar examples. I remember in my wanderings in that country coming across a tiny altar to the deity of the forest, in the depth of a wood. It contained offerings of two or three *sen* (farthings), and we left them for the deputy of the god, the poor country priest who should come from over the mountains.

The local deities are indeed hard to give up. There is no knowing what they may do to you in revenge, and "there's no harm done in hanging up a horse-shoe, even if it doesn't bring good luck."

A friend of mine, an Englishman, was exploring in the country of the Sayots, a little-known Mongol tribe, whose habitat lies 500 miles to the west of the Buriats. From Siberia he had crossed the Sayansk and the Tannu Ola ranges into Mongolia, and was making in the direction of Kobdo. Again and again he had to swim rivers on horseback, and coming one day to a larger one than usual, he found it in flood. The current was alarmingly swift, and it was a case of touch and go in mid-stream. His Mongol guide had begun by muttering prayers, but as he neared the middle his supplications to the presiding deity of the river grew louder and louder, and his free hand was raised higher and higher in entreaty, until his voice ended in almost a scream. Fortunately for my friend, the genius of the river was favourably disposed, and they reached the other side half drowned, yet alive and safe. Turning to his guide, who was a kind of deacon of his village temple, my friend said, "But I thought you were a Buddhist?"

"Yes, master," he replied, "but it is always well to keep on good terms with the local god."

Early last century, with the sanction of Alexander I., three English missionaries were despatched by the London Missionary Society to the Buriats. Mr. Stallybrass and his wife, after a stay of a year and a half in Irkutsk, reached Selenginsk in October, 1819, and were closely followed by Messrs. Swan and Yuille and Mrs. Yuille. For twenty-two years they continued their work, moving, in 1825, 200 miles further into the centre of the field of operations. The nomadic habits of the tribe rendered their work difficult and precarious. In order to get hold of the children and educate them they had to board and feed them, but even then their absence was grudged. The missionaries plodded doggedly on until, after about twenty years' labour, there were signs of the "reception of truth" among some of their flock. Then a serious difficulty arose. These promising disciples were ready for baptism, but a pledge had been extracted from the English missionaries by the Russian Synod, which they had strictly kept, that no converts should be baptized. The Russian Church had no objection to receive them into her bosom, but it scarcely suited the purpose of the London Society to win over converts for the Russian Orthodox Church. Moreover, the liberal policy of Alexander I. was now replaced by an *ukaz* of Nicolas I. to the effect that the Synod in future would do all its own missionary work. In 1840, therefore, the English mission was abandoned, and three graves of their loved ones mark the spot where these voluntary exiles spent their strength. They have left to themselves one great testimony in the excellent translation of the Bible from the Hebrew and Greek into the Buriat tongue, or, rather, the Mongol written language used by the Buriats, a translation which the Russian priests use as a basis of theirs.

The Russian Orthodox Church has not made very great headway, and out of a total of 200,000 the Christian Buriats

are said to number only 14,000. In the words of Graf Keyserling, "They (the Russian priests) are opposed by a faith that has struck deep into the roots of the nation, and the moral principles of which are held as beyond all doubt. They have to do with a Church which is more firmly organized than their own, and they find in the lamas opponents who are more variedly intellectual and—unfortunately, it must be added—more moral than they."

Russian influence is beginning to tell on the nomadic life of the Buriats, and the advantages of agriculture, and the need for settlement to substantiate a claim to property against the Russian immigrant, are gradually influencing the former in the direction of a settled life. Already they are building wooden huts, in which they dwell for a short while. Occasionally, too, there is intermarriage between the Russian peasant and the Buriat; indeed, the latter is known among the Russians locally by the term Bratsky.* In some cases the children are even sent to Russian schools, and at Moscow a half-caste Buriat, whom I saw at dinner in my hotel, is a doctor with a large practice in that city.

But I must resist the temptation to linger over the habits and customs of a tribe which has up to the present received so little attention from students.

In approaching Lake Baikal from Verkhne Udinsk the Trans-Baikalian line trends directly north for twenty-four miles, following the Selenga river and avoiding the Khamar Daban range, which rises to 6000 feet in height, and finally takes a west-south-westerly direction, towards the lake at Misovaya. The journey by the Trans-Siberian Railway has been repeatedly described, and I will not weary the reader with a repetition, or bore him with statistics of the construction and working of the line. A few impressions shall suffice. My journey was henceforward made with speed—

* *Bratsky* means "fraternal," from *brat*, "brother." The term is intended as a diminutive of "brother," similarly to our use of "Sissy" for "sister."

Siberian speed—in order to reach England before Christmas, which I accomplished with a margin of four days, allowing a few days' rest in Moscow and St. Petersburg to recover from the effects of the journey through Manchuria.

The only contrast this part of my trip offers to those of others over the same route is the difference of season. Most undertake the journey by the Trans-Siberian Railway in summer.

Five thousand miles of snow, from the Khingan mountains to St. Petersburg—no mere drifts, but a vast thick, white mantle everywhere—was an impressive sight that no words of mine will convey. Day after day, week after week, the same white pall, the vast country asleep, the forests unstirred by a whisper of breeze, the trees weighted with their six months' burden of snow, the huts buried deep, and nothing but a thin blue thread of smoke curling heavenwards, or a muffled figure crossing the yard, told of life within. Friends ask, "Was it not monotonous?" No; not at all. The glorious mountain scenery of Trans-Baikalia, with its deep, fir-clad valleys, was followed by Lake Baikal, that huge sheet of water surrounded by a magnificent mountain range, snow-clad from summit to base. "But was not the plain—the 2000-mile plain between Irkutsk and the Urals—deadly dull?" Again, no. One day we were running through a 100-mile forest, peering into the mysterious depths of the *taiga* (it was as if you were riding through a narrow riding in an unknown wood), and the next you were out upon a low plateau, watching the caravans on a frozen river, or the little log-built village in distant hollow.

Lake Baikal, which marks the division between Eastern and Western Siberia, is an extraordinary sheet of water in more ways than one. Not only is it the largest fresh-water lake in the Eastern hemisphere, but it boasts the deepest soundings. In one spot the lead touches the bottom at a depth of 3185 feet. The level of its surface is 1561 feet

BAIKAL STATION ON THE LAKE, WITH THE TWO ICE-BREAKERS.

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above the sea. The water is of wonderful limpidity, and has given rise to many local legends. It goes by the name of Dalai Nor (ocean lake), or Bai-kul (rich sea), among the Mongols. Its length is 400 miles, and its width where the great ferries cross from Misovaya to a landing-station called Baikal 38½ miles.

Two ice-breakers, built by Messrs. Armstrong & Co.—the *Baikal* and the smaller *Angara*—ply across the lake, the former supposed to take the trains, but only doing so on special occasions, when, for instance, an important official is travelling. The surface is liable to sudden and violent storms, and the passage is as much feared, and lasts as long, as the Dover to Ostend crossing. I made the crossing in the *Angara*, with a favourable wind; but so strong was it that, on attempting to return to Mysovaya, she was beaten back, and had to give it up after an hour's struggle. To the east the mountains drop to low hills as they approach the lake, and on the west great cliffs, larch-covered, rise out of the water; but to the south, in winter, is a remarkably imposing sight. A great jagged wall of mountains, snow-clad from base to summit, like a slice from the top of the Pyrenees in mid-winter, crowded down to the shore, making the problem of railway construction an extremely difficult one.

Such is the strength of the wind, that though it was then the end of November, and ice filled the dock and fringed the shores, the lake was not frozen over—not until late in December do the ice-crushers come into play with their treble screws (one in front and two behind), and propelled on to the ice break it with their weight, to be again forced forward on to the unbroken fringe. My fellow-passengers waggishly named the *Baikal vodokol* (water-breaker), instead of *lodokol* (ice-breaker), because it sometimes fails to make its way. The explanation given me was to the effect that the authorities stipulated for a vessel to break two and a half feet of ice, and the

Baikal was constructed to make its way through four feet; but that the ice is sometimes found to be as much as seven feet thick. Through the winter sledges still make the journey across, and incredibly fast times have been done. Captain Cochrane, in the account of his wonderful pedestrian journey through Russia and Siberian Tartary in 1820, says, "We crossed in two and a half hours. Such is, however, the rapidity with which three horses abreast cross this lake, that the late Governor of Irkutsk usually did it in two hours." Under such conditions, it is of course dangerous to attempt to stop the horses on it, and sometimes the sledge moves faster than the steeds, overtakes them, and slews round. The surface, when frozen over, presents many dangers in the shape of holes and weak places, especially at the beginning and towards the end of the sledging season. At these times the trip is undertaken at considerable risk, and prices rise in proportion with the danger, mounting, I was told, to as much as 400 rubles (£42). Many lives are lost every winter. Two days later I was thus precipitated into the water in crossing a river about a quarter of a mile wide—sledge, horse, driver, and all went in; but, fortunately, we were in a comparatively shallow reach, and we managed to scramble out and seize the affrighted horse. So cold was it, however, that the water froze on us at once.

A forty-mile journey over a line badly constructed and subject to landslips brings the traveller from the lake to Irkutsk. It is a town of nearly 60,000 inhabitants, with a few imposing stone and brick buildings, including the cathedral, museum, theatre, the two governors' houses, schools, etc. For the rest, it presents the usual mixture and anomalous condition of the Siberian town, with three or four "first-class hotels," lighted by electric light, and yet not one supplying really decent accommodation; streets upon streets of log buildings, including the home of more than one millionaire, and a main artery with fine

shops and lofty buildings, jostling wooden erections, or frowning on empty sites.

One thing impressed itself upon me at Irkutsk which is worthy of mention. I refer to the large and splendid schools. Evidently it was an exceptional centre of education. One met students everywhere, hurrying along with books under their arms, and quite as many maidens as youths. Many of the institutions owe their existence to private munificence, and to the presence of large numbers of educated exiles. I was told that at least 500 girls attended the gymnasium and the other institutions for secondary education. They came from all parts of Siberia; many of them boarded out in families, and proceeded from here to the University of Tomsk.

On the evening of the day following my arrival, the jubilee of the foundation of the museum was being celebrated, and a professor from Tomsk was delivering a biological lecture. I was considerably astonished to find the great lecture-room full of enthusiastic students, both male and female. I felt for the moment translated to a *feriencursus* in a German university. The contrast to all this came when we got outside. I was with a lady resident, to whom I had brought letters from the son of an exile on Sakhalin, and I naturally offered to drive her home, but she laughingly replied, "Oh no, thank you; I am a 'new woman,' you see; and besides, I *have* my revolver!" Even to my ears this sounded strange in a big populous city, for I knew she had only to pass through main streets. On Sakhalin it was so familiar as not to be remarked, but here it was another thing.

A spirit of freedom seemed to reign in the town, especially in the educational realm. There was a breadth and liberality about it that would not be permitted in Moscow, Kiev, or St. Petersburg, and I was tempted to ask, "What if the Government were to put its hand down so ——, and restrict your aspirations and narrow your range of study

as in the west, what would happen? Would you rise? Are you strong enough?" The only answer was a smile, and a shrug of the shoulders.

From Irkutsk I resumed my journey, after waiting two days for the train *de luxe*. To Moscow the distance is 3390 miles, and we were timed to do it in eight days. The way lies over a low plateau, and occasionally follows a broad river valley. As far as Nizhni Udinsk the forests are much thinned, but beyond, the line suddenly plunges into the *taiga* for 100 miles. Krasnoyarsk and the junction for Tomsk passed, and we were upon the low level of the Baraba steppe, which stretches as far as the Ural mountains.

The carriages were excellently fitted, and more luxurious because roomier than the European. Beginning with a speed of fourteen miles an hour, we increased to twenty by the time the Urals were reached. A white pall of snow hid everything, but many a picture or little wayside drama remains in my mind. At one time passing through the *taiga* at sunrise, the great Sol scarcely awake was glinting through the glades, lighting up the frosted silver birches until they glistened fairy-like, or flecking the snow carpet with crowns of light; at another the great orb was westering, but he stayed awhile to paint the distant ridges a rosy pink, and to fire the red-boled pines to a living glow. It is a new source of joy to those accustomed to a more humid climate, this play of light in an absolutely clear atmosphere, and the brilliant sunshine without the suggestion of a thaw. Another picture remains in my mind. Outside the thermometer registered 37° of frost (Fahr.), and the sky was a clear, passionless, greenish-blue. The line ran along a ridge, from which we could see a goodly distance on either side. The sun was setting, and through the lace-like tracery of the graceful birches, decked with frost diamonds, a glimpse was vouchsafed of a celestial city rising far, far away out of a pure white snowy

AT A WAYSIDE STATION, TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY.

"AN OBELISK BEARING THE INSCRIPTION ON ONE SIDE, ASIA, AND ON THE OTHER, EUROPE." [*To face page* 461.

plain—or was it but the glistening cupolas and soaring towers of a Siberian town ?

Frequent stoppages to pick up fuel yielded many a picturesque glimpse by the wayside. Here, it was lines of peasant women clad in *shubi* to their knees, and felt top-boots, selling pine-cone seeds, butter, eggs, milk, etc., the latter carefully covered up to prevent its freezing. There, it was a train of hay-laden sledges crawling along a river, scarcely distinguishable except by its suspiciously level surface from the rest of the snowy waste. At Petropavlovsk, caravans of camels drawing sledges were starting south for their long journey to Tashkend in Turkestan.

The frost has its advantages as well as its drawbacks. It is the time of transit *par excellence*. It is true that water for the stoves and the train in general had to be brought hot, lest it should freeze on the way ; and men at the stations had to chop off long icicles from the train ; but, on the other hand, carcases of oxen were sent direct from the slaughter-house to the station on sledges, and were simply transferred direct to the railway-vans for transit to the East. There was no need of cold chambers or refrigerators.

Roughly speaking, Omsk is the dividing-line for the flow of natural products east and west. From places east of Omsk, wheat, rye, barley, and oats, meat, skins, and even dairy produce trend eastward to supply the needs of newer and less advanced settlements ; but from Omsk they begin to flow westward to St. Petersburg and Moscow, northward by the rivers to the Arctic ports, southward to Odessa, and by caravan to Central Asia.

About twenty miles west of Kurgan, the line enters European Russia, that is, administratively speaking, for the old boundary-line between Europe and Asia is 250 miles further west. High up among the Urals, a few miles east of Zlato-ust is an obelisk bearing the inscription on one side, Asia, and on the other, Europe. The original is on the old post-road, and, if only it could speak, would have

many a heart-rending tragedy to tell. How many exiles has it seen take their last long look on their homeland, and how many friends and relatives parting in bitter anguish with the banished, whose faces they were never to see again ?

What a change it was to be among the mountains again, the first that the line negotiates for 2400 miles ; since indeed the Khamar Daban range on the further side of Lake Baikal. Leaving behind the great level expanse of white, broken only here and there by a thinned forest of birch and pine, the train literally plunges into the Urals, and though as a great mountain range they are as unimpressive in height as they are imposing in length, the pleasure at being once more among the rocks and fir-clad heights is in no way diminished. The trees are no longer stunted or bent with the sweeping winds, but grow tall and free as in a park. In the Yablonoi mountains of the Amur *oblast* the valleys were broad, and we swept round big curves, but here the hills hemmed us in and seemed to threaten us. At one moment the train dived into a narrow rocky cutting, at another it traversed an embankment with vistas of range after range of snow-clad mountains with a lace-like covering of fir copses, and of white plateaux beyond. The snow was deep, soft, and woolly, unlike the crisp, hard, ground-glass kind that we had left the other side of Omsk. The frequent log-huts of the snow-clearers looked cosy, set in sheltered nooks among the trees and towering rocks. How inhospitable by contrast seemed the villages on the bare exposed plains ; but the Kirghiz and the Buriat would be as little content with the hill homes. How stuffy and breathless to be shut up in the valleys ; how baulking to have their view impeded by mountain and hill, how homesick they would be for the broad expanse of sky and the sunsets of the steppe.

At the summit of the Urals a snow-storm threatened to block our way, but the wind abating saved us from

impassable drifts. On the western side, the mountains dropped in gentle declivities to the great plain of European Russia. It was as if we were among the broad slopes of an English park, clothed with graceful pines and firs. The snow mantle lay deep and soft, smoothing out all roughnesses with a gentle hand and rendering all things beautiful. The trees wore their warm winter garb of fleecy white, and the hazel thickets with veritable blossoms of snow looked like a cotton-field at harvest.

Another day passed, and I was on the vast plain nearing Samara, and crossing the great frozen Volga by the fine bridge at Sizran. From Sizran less than two days' journey brought me to Moscow, which was reached punctually to the minute. The roads, the rivers, and every other physical boundary were indistinguishable, and pine-branches had been placed along the routes to guide the infrequent travellers. Hurdles bending down before the wind bordered the line in exposed places to fend off the drifting snow. The country was strikingly little altered, as far as one could see, in entering Europe. The same great snowy plain merging in sky at the indiscernible horizon, and the same sparsely inhabited country.

Miles and miles intervened between the little villages, whose kennel-like huts in the deep snow were scarcely distinguishable save for the church of white stucco with its green roof and octagonal tower, crowned by a cupola, towering like Gulliver among the Liliputian homes of the peasants. How dull, how cut off from the world must be the life of such villages separated from their nearest neighbours by twenty miles.

After having lived for centuries in isolated villages on huge plains, with little or no communication with the outer world, having had no Renaissance, no Reformation or Revolution, the Russian peasant has at last made his discovery of a new world, with some of the hopes and outgoings of imagination that all these brought to us in Western Europe.

It is difficult for us to conceive, to mentally sympathize with the fatalistic element in the nature of the *muzhik*, living for centuries his life of isolation, fighting with the energy, not of hope but rather of despair, against the hard conditions of cold and scarcity. Then there came to him suddenly the great expectations raised by the emancipation, which in so many cases proved a fraud. Now this opening up of a new land of fabulous resources, gold and silver, copper, coal, and iron, of agriculture, cattle breeding and dairy produce, all this has come as the discovery of a new world, and you feel it in the air. Even as you talk with the people you are amused at their *naïveté* and credulity, but the feeling is there.

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THE END.

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MAP OF N.E. ASIA.

AUTHOR'S ROUTE

Railways

Tran-Siberian, Chinese Eastern (Manchurian) and Usuri

Frontier of Manchuria

Boundaries of 3 Manchurian Provinces

Scale 0 100 200 300 400 500 Miles

1: 12,600,000.

ARCTIC OCEAN

YAKUTSK

IRKUTSK

AMUR REGION

MANCHURIA

HEHLUNGKIANG

KAMCHATKA

OKHOTSK SEA

KURILE ISLANDS

PACIFIC OCEAN

SAKHALIN

PRIMORSK

YEZO

JAPAN SEA

NIPPON

SHIKOKU

KYOSHU

KOREA

YELLOW SEA

MONGOLIA

CHINESE EMPIRE

SREDNI KOLIMSK

R. Kolima

R. Yana

R. Indigirka

Verkhoyansk

R. Lena

R. Aldan

YAKUTSK

R. Vilui

R. Olekma mts.

Yablonoi mts.

R. Vitim

R. Angara

L. Baikal

Barguzin

STRETENSK

NERCHENSK

R. Shilka

CHITA

KHAILAESKY RAZ.

IRKUTSK

BAIKAL

VERKHNE UDINSK

L. of Geese

R. Khilok

Selenginsk

Ringoda

R. Onon

Manchuria Sta.

Dalai nor

Hingan mts.

Khingan mts.

R. Nonni

R. Argun

R. Selenga

URGA

TSITSIKAR

KHARBIN

R. Sungari

L. Khanka

R. Ussuri

Ayan

NIKOLAEVSK

Shantar Is.

R. Amgun

L. Kizi

Mariinsk

Sophiysk

ALEXANDROVSK

Strs. of Tartary

R. Amur

Bor

Sikhota alin mountains

Malmyzhkoy

Korsakovsk

La Pérouse Straits

KHABAROVSK

BLAGOVESTCHENSK

Sahalien

AIGUN

SIKIN

SPASKAYA

NIKOLSKOY

VLADIVOSTOK

NIHGUTA

Suifun

Peter the Great Gulf

IKIRINSKAYA

PETROPAVLOVSK

MUKDEN

R. Liao

KENG-TIEN

Liao Tung Penin.

Yalu R.

Tumen R.

HIU-CHUANG

GENSAN

SEOUL

CHEMULPHO

DALNI

PORT ARTHUR

Gulf of Pe-chi-li

PEKING

R. Pei-Ho

TAKU

CHIFU

FUSAN

TSUSHIMA IS.

NAGASAKI

Inland Sea

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